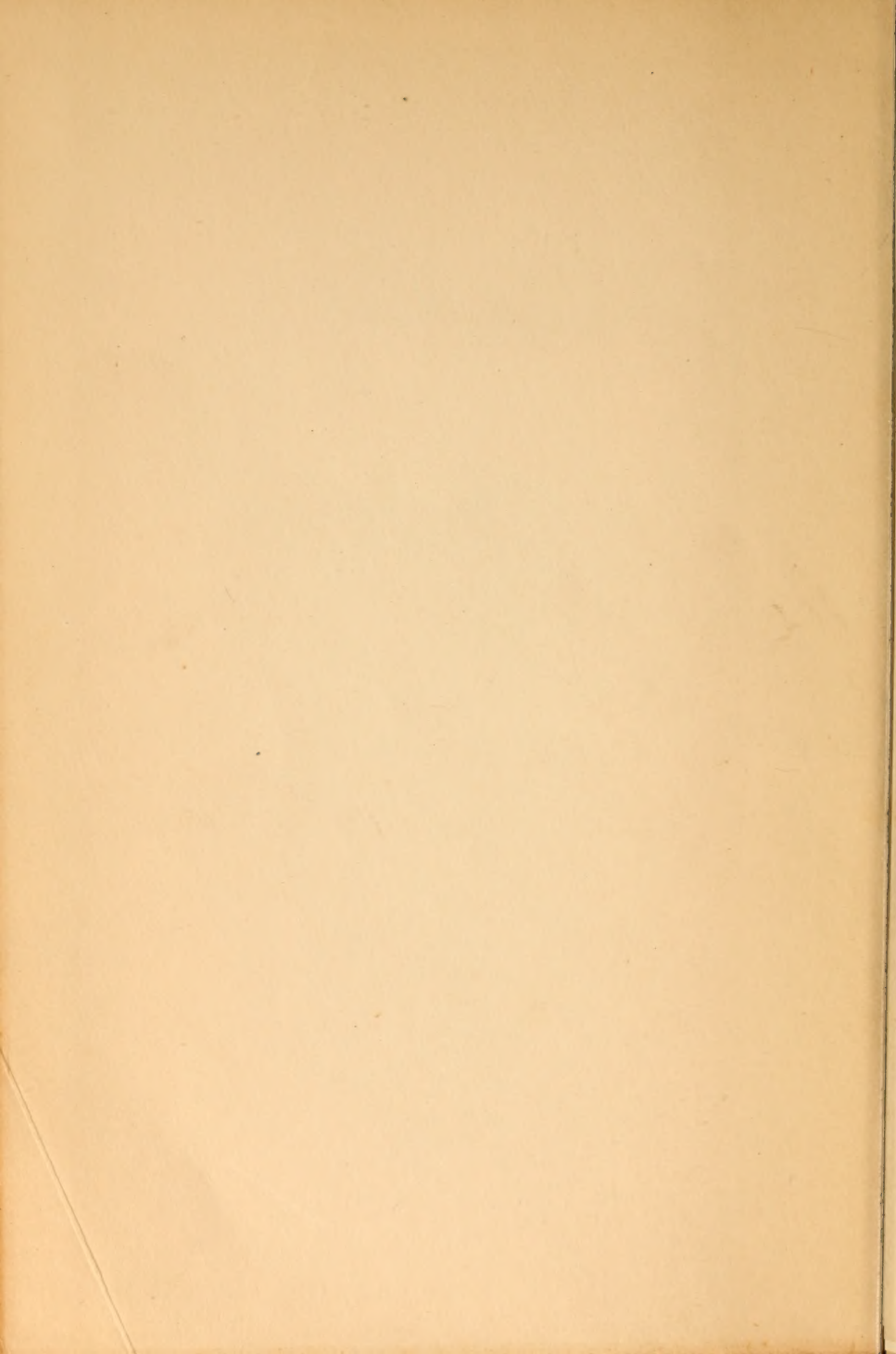
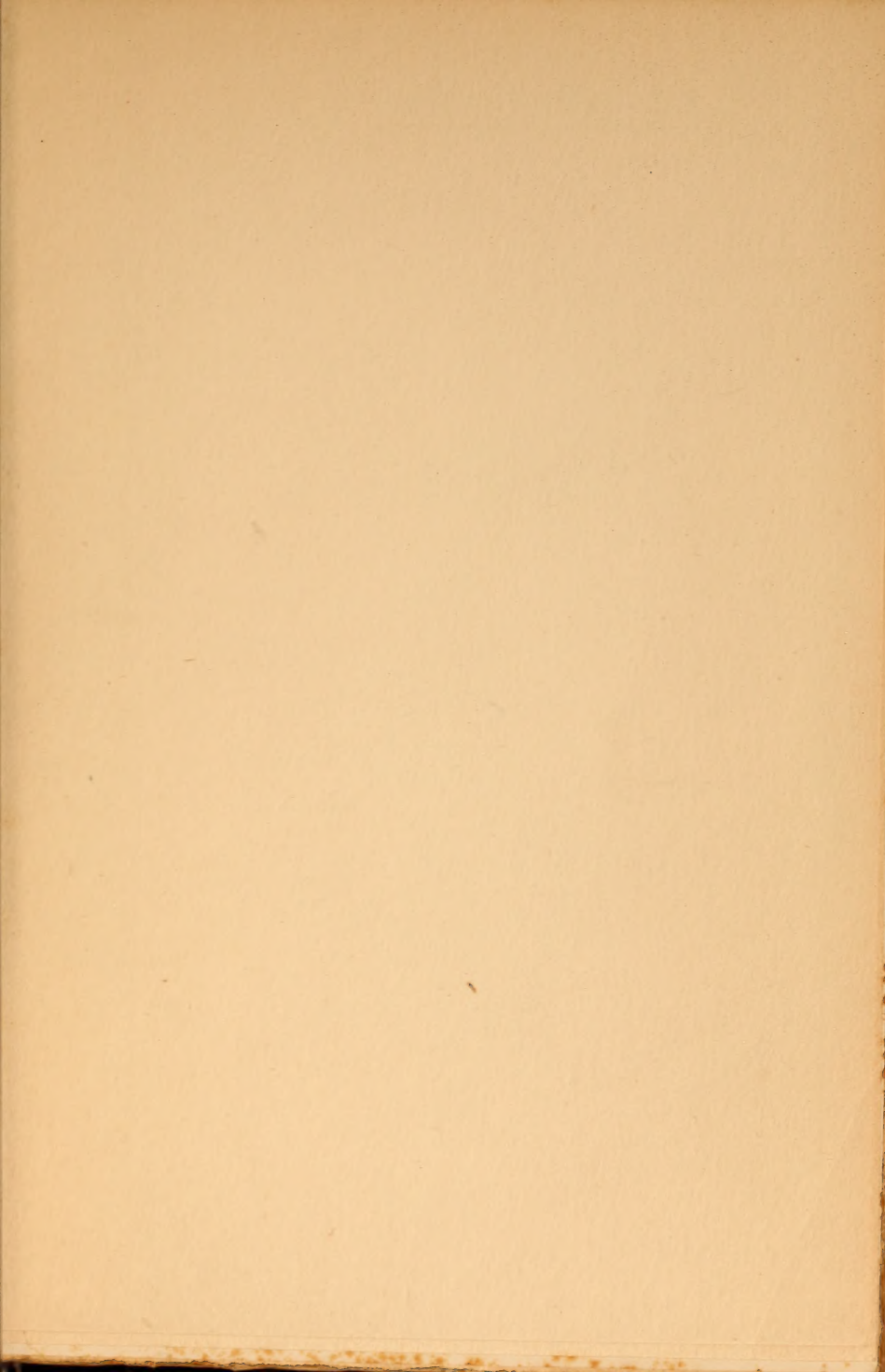


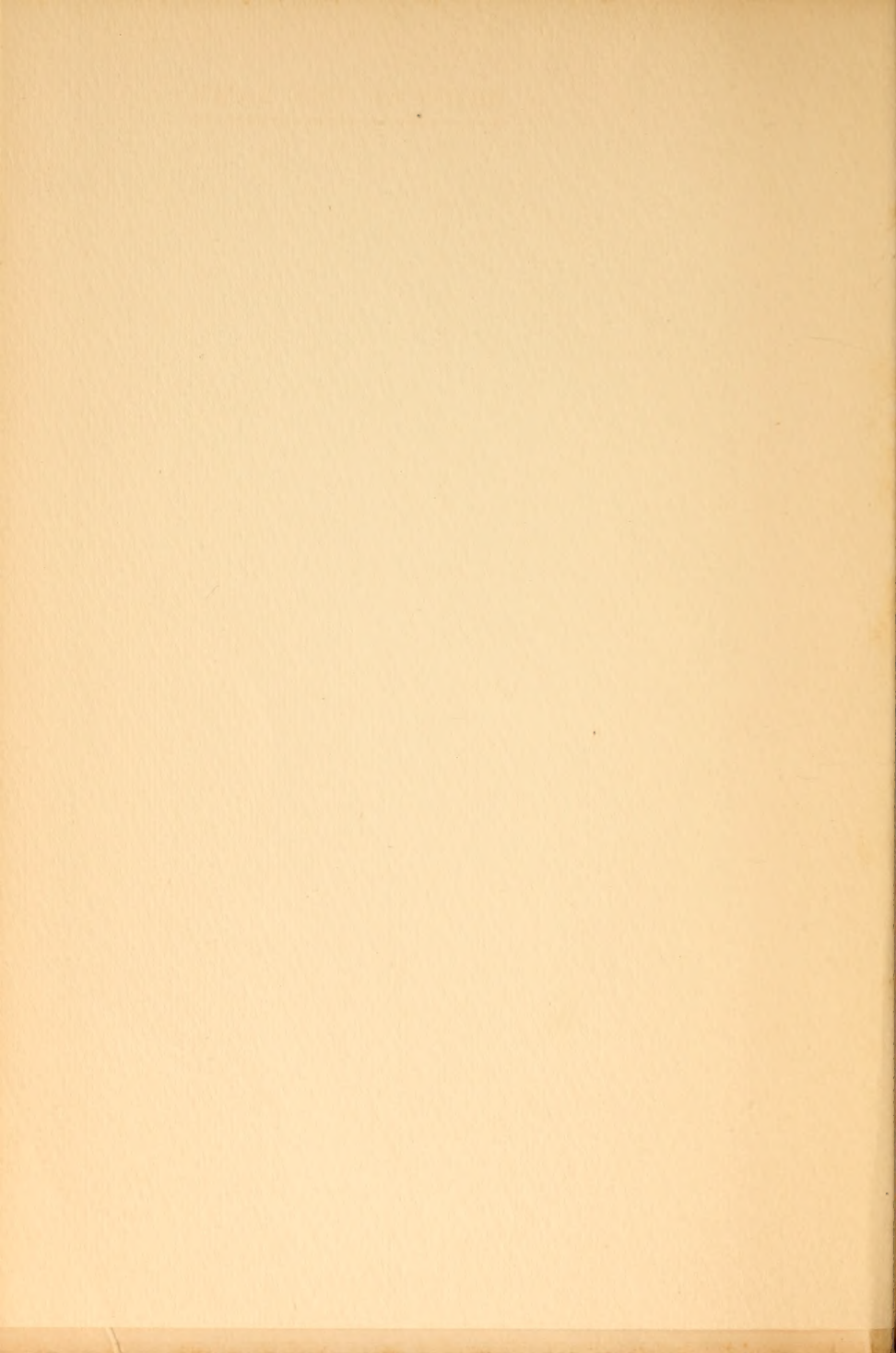
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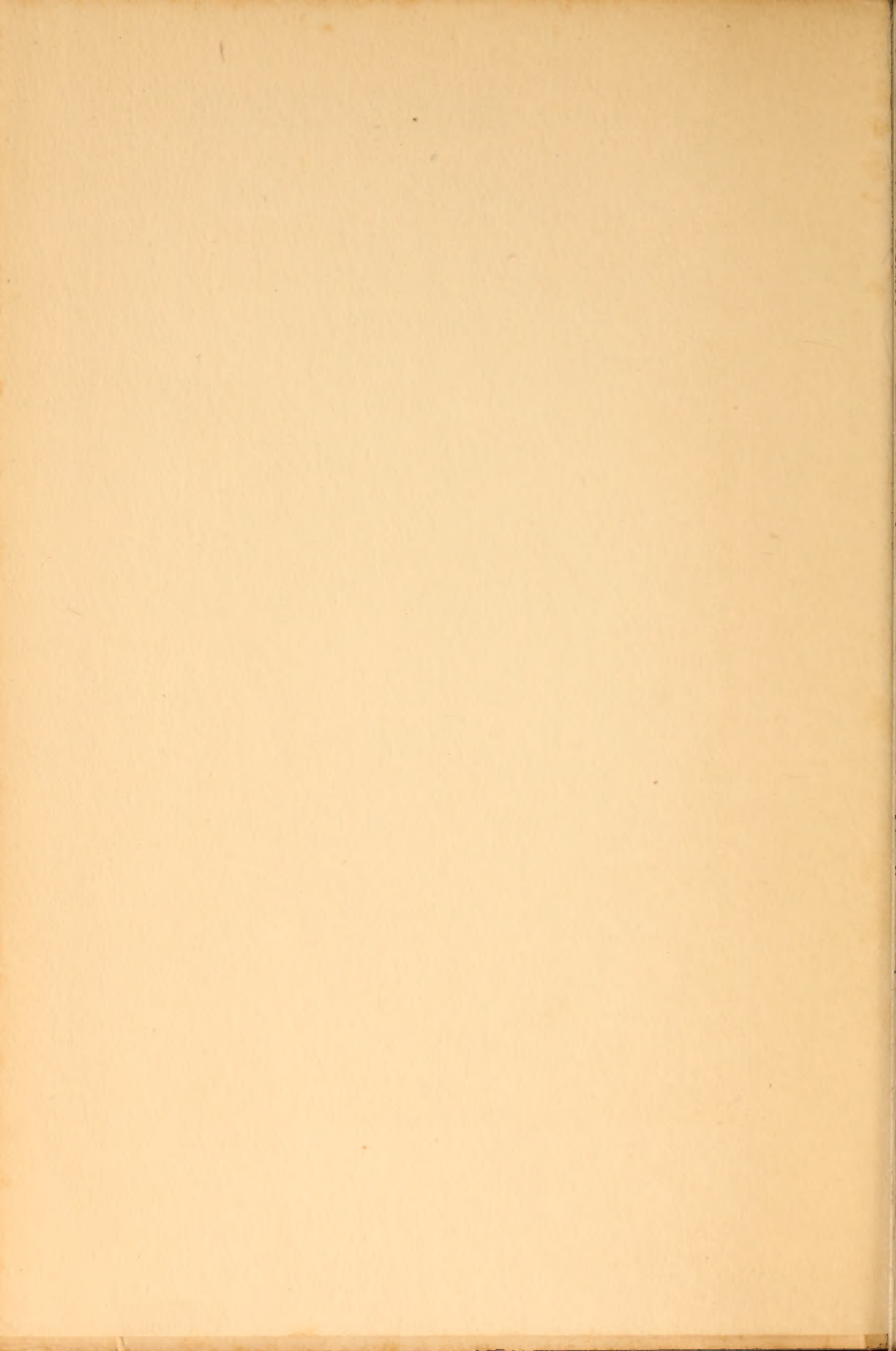
R. A. Cordell







BRIDE OF THE LAMB





SCENE FROM ACT I

BRIDE of the LAMB

BY
WILLIAM HURLBUT

Introduction By
ARTHUR POLLOCK



BONI and
LIVERIGHT
New York, 1926

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INTRODUCTION

BY

ARTHUR POLLOCK

It is unlikely, I venture to guess, without knowing William Hurlbut, that the author of "Bride of the Lamb" would consider himself done an injury if it were said that when this tragedy cleft its way into the consciousness of its first audience at the Greenwich Village Theater, that audience found the play's quality, its force and fierce candor a little surprising. A writer of irresponsible comedies had compelled them to watch a woman bleed to death. Circumstance had cut an artery in a play by a man accustomed to employ circumstance primarily for tickling funny-bones.

Mr. Hurlbut had written plays innumerable before this one stung its hearers, plays designed for audiences of other kinds—"Little Miss Fix-It," for instance, and "Half-a-Husband," "Are You a Crook?"—none of which gave hint that buried in him somewhere was "Bride of the Lamb." "The Strange Woman" in 1913 bore evidence of a kind, for it was sturdy, sharp writing. But it proved a firmer stepping stone for Elsie Ferguson than for

William Hurlbut. "Romance and Arabella" in 1917, fanciful and nicely crazy, fitted neatly the methods of Laura Hope Crews and afforded Alfred Lunt a foothold in the New York theater, but found itself soon flitting out of sight. "Trimmed in Scarlet" was untidy Wilde, "Lilies of the Field" was wrought of shrewd, amusing chatter.

Blessed with imagination, William Hurlbut employed it prodigally, taking little care to order it. He liked his plays witty and unhampered by conventions. Plots he hated, I should say, as bastard things, treating them badly. To stick to a simple story irked him unbearably. At every turn, at any rate, he found it pleasantest to chase fancy recklessly around the corner; incident discovered him eager more often than not to play hooky and slip spryly off a-hunting pots of brilliants at rainbows' ends. If, like the hunted fellow in the paper chase, he dropped shimmering white bits of cleverness along the way, he let them fall so irregularly as to make following him difficult. In short, though a fecund fellow and bright, Hurlbut was frivolous. "Bride of the Lamb" is most deadly earnest.

Never, though, was Hurlbut the ordinary, smug playwright. I have often thought, and said, I hope, sometime or other, that he could display unusual gifts in the theater if he would forget to be witty and original and conquer his fear of the commonplace. He might have written such a play as this

long ago—after finishing “The Strange Woman,” perhaps—if he had put to it not his mind but his emotions. Here he does that precisely.

To be sure, no hot tear is permitted to course pathetically down his cheek in compassion for Ina Bowman and her hearty lover, nor do we find him wringing his hands and begging us to be miserable with his heroine. Yet feeling has gone head-first into the writing, leaving fancy out of it.

Mr. Hurlbut is one of those men who, having restricted himself for years to one field, suddenly turns his talents to another to find that they fit it exactly. Giving over playing with life in comedies, he has taken to laying it bare. In consequence that first audience at the Greenwich Village saw drama as real as life, though better acted.

It is a study of hunger and starvation. Ina Bowman, enduring insensitively a privation of the existence of which she is scarcely aware, stumbles by accident upon love and bolts it greedily, not because from the start she knows it for what it is but because she thinks that in accepting a lover she is embracing God. Like Fanny in Shaw’s “Fanny’s First Play,” who in the ecstasy of hymn-singing, thumps a policeman and goes giddily off to jail, the inarticulate little Mrs. Bowman plunges joyously into the orgies of a religious revival, believing herself brushing heaven when actually she teeters over hell.

It begins slowly, this tragedy, dwelling with some-

thing amounting almost to determination upon the sorry details of the woman's dull existence, for Hurlbut has made up his mind to make his metamorphosis complete. And so faithful is he this time in curbing that bouncing, obstreperous imagination of his and concentrating strictly upon the commonplace that you are tempted in its early moments to conclude that this is to be one of those exercises in the exposition of trivialities, a play the point of which is that nothing ever happens, a rather slavish, stolid "slice of life."

Which it isn't at all. For from these slow, tempered beginnings springs in finest contrast one of the most vivid and biting tragedies of recent years. The inert woman, painfully faithful wife of a worthless bit of human waste, bursts suddenly into bloom when chance leads into their household a man with fire in him. The fire, absorbing its heat from the gospels, or at least kindled at the moment by an enthusiasm for God, blows flame into the ashes of the slow-witted wife. And the glowing boarder, visiting town to tick off his weekly quota of those souls to be saved by the fears and the fury that lie in the lashings of revivalist tongues, spells for the woman escape. She has only to rub her eyes and her emotions awaken swiftly as, moved by the gusty spirit of this robust trouping preacher, she flings herself with him into the arms of the Lord. Whereafter it may be discovered that it is the arms of the Lord's

loud advocate that she longs for most feverishly, that religion has stimulated a love which not it but its expounder must satisfy. And so she smoulders with jealousy of other women also fascinated by her god and eager to honor him, steals to outstrip them, murders that she may be free to follow him.

This fusing of religious ecstasy and blind love, this heady confusion of primitive instincts, Hurlbut treats in strictest honesty, letting his emotions run free while curbing an ingenuity that must have taken a deal of curbing, opening wide and boldly every seam of his story, but contributing no comment on the pain the opening brings to light.

There is no pose in it, either, though Mr. Hurlbut may possibly have started its writing with tongue in cheek, impishly resolved perhaps to put his quick talents to sober use by way of proving that a clever man can turn out so accurate an imitation of the sterner dramatists that the sterner ones will envy him. If such was his intent at the beginning, he must have been carried away by the pains and joys of his heroine along with the woman herself, forgetting himself and building better than his intent. Obviously he is moved by his work more deeply than the most susceptible of his auditors. He believes it. And if he leaned here and there for strength on Sigmund Freud, it was for a strength he did not need.

"Bride of the Lamb" has been more fortunate

than plays often are in falling into the hands of producers, a director and actors of lively comprehension. It would be difficult to find for Ina Bowman a player more sensitive than Alice Brady has proved herself, or a director more articulate than Robert Milton.

I suppose the play has weaknesses that should be dwelt upon, but they are nothing worse than the results of too slight a faith in new powers, a distrust of the implicit. You would not say precisely that "Bride of the Lamb" is as pure, astringent and powerful as "Œdipus." Yet it breathes and its breathing hurts.

ARTHUR POLLOCK.

BRIDE OF THE LAMB



CAST OF CHARACTERS

ROY BOWMAN

INA BOWMAN

VERNA

MRS. BASCOM

MARGARET AVERY

REV. JOHNSON

REV. SANDERSON T. ALBAUGH

MINNIE HERRICK

THE CORONER

THE DOCTOR

THE SHERIFF



BRIDE OF THE LAMB

By

WILLIAM HURLBUT

As presented at the Greenwich Village Theater,
New York, on March 30, 1926

Presented by

MacGOWAN, JONES and O'NEILL

In association with ROBERT MILTON

Directed by ROBERT MILTON

Setting by Cleon Throckmorton

ROY BOWMAN.....	EDMUND ELTON
INA BOWMAN.....	ALICE BRADY
VERNA.....	ARLINE BLACKBURN
MRS. BASCOM.....	MABEL MONTGOMERY
MARGARET AVERY.....	LORNA ELLIOTT
REV. JOHNSON.....	GERALD CORNELL
REV. ALBAUGH.....	CRANE WILBUR
MINNIE HERRICK.....	JULIA RALPH
THE CORONER.....	HAROLD HARTSELL
THE SHERIFF.....	RALPH MACBANE
THE DOCTOR.....	JAMES FRANCIS ROBERTSON



ACT I



BRIDE OF THE LAMB

ACT I

The scene is the living room in the Bowmans' house in a small town of one of the Central states. It is a one-story house. A door at back opens onto the porch; a door D L to a bedroom; a door L C B to another bedroom; a door D R to the dining room; a window U R. The furnishings are ordinary, but there is evidence of great neatness, and an effort to be "tasty." It is a Sunday noon in the summer at the present time.

[ROY BOWMAN is sitting moodily staring out of the window. He is 40 years old, a large frame covered with soft, rather shapeless flesh, a formless sort of face. He gives no impression of being a big man, although by dimensions he is tall and broad. His hair is thin and grows into a soft down at the neck. His expression is

aggrieved, his lips pouting; they seem to have carried over into manhood the fibers of childhood. With the hurt pouting look there is an underlying surliness. At the same time his face breaks easily enough into smiles; when the mood for smiling is there it ripples with ingenuous, smiling, soft globular surfaces of pleasantness. But the tissues that support the countenance seem unequal to the demand on them for presenting a mask to face life; they respond to changing moods too readily, and with excess. One has the feeling of shame to witness the dignities of the countenance so little respected, to witness such a betrayal. His mood at the moment is grievously morose, a flow of self pity is suffusing him, he is withdrawing into a place of volitionlessness, a nirvana of the self. INA, his wife, enters from the opposite side of the room—behind him. She is a trim, almost buxom little woman of 33. Her friends call her a practical little body. She is meticulously neat in her appearance. She was a pretty little girl. Her gaze seeks her husband, where he sits sunk into his chair, with a searching look, distressed, hoping for a sign that his mood is not so bad as she knows it to be. There is a flutter of trepidation too. She swallows a sigh, and her features set themselves into a front of cheeri-

ness. She goes to a wall rack for holding papers, and takes from it a dust cloth which has been exactly folded before it was put there the last time. She uses the cloth on a convolution of the table leg where her quick house-keeper's eye has seen a little dust. Then she folds the cloth and puts it in its place again, underneath the newspapers in the rack. Roy seems to be more withdrawn into his mood, if anything, than before she came into the room.]

INA

Vernie'll be back from Sunday School most any minute now.

[There is no response; she busies herself for a moment.]

I s'pose I should have gone to church. I don't know what folks'll say—my staying away two Sundays running. It ud a done you good to go, Roy. It'd take you out of yourself. Still, I know when a man works hard all week—— I don't know as I blame you, Roy. Still . . . I get almost mortified showing up to church alone so many Sundays.

[She casts her anxious glance toward him, and draws a stifled sigh again.]

We got fricasseed chicken. I knew you liked it best that way. Are you hungry, Roy?

ROY

Nope.

INA

Oh, now try to eat some of the good dinner, Roy.
It'll do you good.

[*Roy shakes his head a little—a very little.*]

They's lots of gravy. And I made dumplin's. I
made 'em that new way. Mrs. Green told me—with
raisins in 'em.

ROY

Huh.

INA

[*Looks at him aghast—tragic.*]

Oh, Roy—I forgot—you don't like raisins——

[*His silence answers.*]

Oh, dear—why ever didn't I remember——

[*Her face is almost ready to burst into tears.*]

Well, I can pick the raisins out for you, Roy.
And there's cup custard.

[*But he is beyond even cup custard. He rises
and goes across to the bedroom door. She
watches him with an apprehensive look.*]

INA

Roy. . . .

ROY

[After a moment he answers.]

What?

INA

Now, Roy—oh, Roy—Vernie'll be here any minute—you ain't going to take anything, are you?

ROY

What you mean take anything?

INA

Oh, Roy—you know—now don't start drinking, Roy! Please. People'll find out——!

ROY

I need a medicine glass of whisky—I've got a bad stommick.

INA

Oh, Roy, that's always the way you start. It's getting a holt on you. You start like this, and then you go on for three days, and last time it was four, just lying there and drinking all the time— Oh, dear— All by yourself— I don't see how you can— Still that's better than if you went out to do it. Oh, Roy, please think of Vernie and me, and the neighbors and everything.

ROY

My stommick's bad. I just need a medicine glass full, that's all.

INA

Oh, Roy, you're getting to be a periodical drinker—yes, you are. It's terrible.

ROY

I ain't a drinker.

INA

Oh, Roy, to think I should live to see the day I should have a drinking man around the house. If people should find out. Oh, dear. Oh, try not to do it, Roy.

ROY

I don't feel good.

[He goes toward the bedroom.]

INA

[Almost wringing her hands.]

Oh, dear.

[Roy turns back, but with a reluctant foot.]

ROY

Did you say dinner was going to be ready?

[She detects a slight grudging note of reaction from his mood.]

INA

[With an eager hopefulness which she is afraid to admit lest she find herself mistaken.]

Yes, Roy. Not so very long. Soon's Vernie comes.

[Roy scuffs across to the window again, stands looking out. INA watches him surreptitiously. She can gather no certain evidence of change in his mood yet. He has regressed so far that it is a slow pull back to the surface again. The change is taking place, however, within his consciousness. Outwardly there is only the sagging, pouting, all but tearful man staring again out of the window. But after a few moments of this a smile picks his features up.]

ROY

Huh! That crazy fool dog trying to run up a tree after the cat. Ha-a-a-a!

[He gives a high laugh, slapping his leg.]

INA

[Taking her cue instantly—and with great relief—runs to peer over his shoulder.]

Ain't that dog the foolishhest thing! My goodness, as though he could climb a tree!

ROY

[Stretches elaborately, and turns away; such childish amusement may be all very well for a woman; he can't be bothered watching dogs.]

Like to see any dog *I* ever had without more sense than that one. I wouldn't *have* a dog that didn't know it couldn't climb trees. Ho-hum. Think I better walk down and meet Vernie.

INA

Oh, yes, Roy. That ud be nice. I would. But I wouldn't start quite yet though.

[Roy whistles a gay jig tune, and dances a few jigging steps clumsily.]

INA

[Indulgently.]

Mercy sakes, Roy, on Sunday! Ain't you terrible!

ROY

Better the day, better the deed.

INA

Ro-why! There goes Mrs. Bascom by—suppose she heard you!

ROY

[*Pretending to call through the window.*]
Hey, Mrs. Bascom, come over and have a dance.

INA

Roy! You're terrible.

ROY

It ud do her good. It ud shake her liver up.

INA

[*Covering her mouth to suppress her shocked delight at this dare-devil of a husband of hers.*]

My goodness—Roy Bowman! If you ain't a case!

[*Roy must live up to this; he goes to the door, opens it a crack, and pretends to call through—but does not actually pitch his voice to a carrying tone.*]

ROY

Mrs. Bascom, how's your liver?

INA

[*Doubling up with shocked laughter, runs to him, pushing him away, and shuts the door.*]

Whatever won't you be up to next! My goodness *lands!*

[*She slaps him.*]

Go and sit down for mercy's sake.

ROY

You didn't know what you was in for when you married me, eh, Iny?

INA

If you aren't the *worst*——!

ROY

Well—got to put up with a bad bargain now. Down to Dental College they always called me a hell raiser!

INA

[*Really shocked.*]

Roy— Oh! such language! You mustn't!

ROY

Aw—pooh! Hell raiser—what's that?

[*He repeats it boldly—daringly, swaggering a little.*]

Hell raiser—pooh—hell raiser—I'll say it!

INA

Guess it's better not to egg you on—fella like you!

[*Suddenly recalling.*]

My lands—that squash!

[*Hurries out to the kitchen.*]

[*ROY remains in his present mood; then gradually sinks into a rumination, broken by a few chuckling smiles as the recent scene recurs to him. He yawns, stretches, blows his breath out through full lips. After a few moments his feet lead him—still absent-eyed—into the bedroom. There is the clink of a bottle against a glass. Then he comes to the door and closes it from within.*]

[*INA returns. She glances out of the window, thinking ROY has gone out. In a moment VERA enters, home from Sunday School. She is twelve, anæmic, spindling, with an adenoidal voice.*]

INA

Back, Vernie?

VERA

Aw-ha.

INA

Where's poppa?

VERNA

I didn't see him. Is dinner ready?

INA

Didn't poppa come to meet you?

VERNA

Uh-uh.

INA

Poppa said he might. We'll have dinner now soon's poppa comes in. Was there many out to Sunday School, dear?

VERNA

Aw-ha.

[Having laid away her Sunday hat carefully, she sits on the couch—first spreading her dress with care. She throws herself back flat on the couch, her gangling legs hanging over.]

INA

Did you have your Golden Text by heart good?
Is that nice for Sunday?

VERNA

I've got a headache.

INA

It's dinner being later on Sunday. But try and sit up for momma. Did Mrs. Bascom stay for Sunday School?

VERNA

Ye-uh, I saw her.

INA

What did she have on?

VERNA

I didn't notice—purple.

INA

Her purple last year's georgette? Was Margaret Avery in her class?

VERNA

Aw-ha.

INA

Was she wearing her eyeglasses—they was to be ready Sat'day.

VERNA

I didn't notice.

INA

Who else was to Sunday school—tell mamma.

VERNA

Oh—a . . . lots—not such a lot.

INA

Any people ask for mamma?

VERNA

Nope. Yes, Mis. Bascom wanted to know how you was.

INA

Did you tell her poppa wasn't very well?

VERNA

No. I didn't know. Ain't he?

INA

I've been afraid poppa was going to have another of his bad spells—but I guess he isn't. You know poppa has these bad sick spells, Vernie. If anybody asks you, you'll always know to say he has these sick spells. Won't you, Vernie?

VERNA

Aw-ha.

*[Still flat on the back of her neck—her pelvis
being most to the fore.]*

INA

Poor poppa.

VERNA

[Silent a few moments—then dispassionately.]
I don't like poppa.

INA

Vernie!

VERNA

Well, I don't. I don't care.

INA

Verna Bowman!—on Sunday——!

VERNA

I don't care.

INA

You mustn't say such awful things! That's wicked. Poppa's a good poppa to you. And poppa's good to mamma. Poppa works hard. He's to the office sometimes till 9 o'clock in the evenings!

Poppa works after office hours lots of times. Poppa pervides well. He does his best. You mustn't ever say such naughty things as that, Vernie. Poppa tries hard to do everything for you—and for momma.

[The reproach has had its emotional effect:

VERNA is flooded with contrite tears. She is still lying prostrate, her arms flung out.]

[INA cannot resist working a little farther into the emotional vein which she has uncovered; she is also experiencing the actor's joy.]

Poppa's a good, kind father. Sometimes if poppa's cross we must remember he's the bread winner, and how hard poppa works for us—filling teeth and extracting and the long hours, and putting up with people—my!

[VERNA is by this time a welter of blubbing, indulging in all the sounds known to tears—snuffling against her hands for want of a handkerchief.]

There now. Here, take momma's. Dry your eyes. Don't let poppa see your crying. Blow your nose nice, dear. There's fricassee chicken and dumplings.

[VERNA is now sitting up, her face a blotch of excretions.]

VERNA

[After sufficient blowings, and dabbings, and sniffs, and gulping to speak.]

Dump-plings——?

INA

A new way with raisins in.

VERNA

[Gulps instead of blowing—it seemed the quicker of the two.]

Rai-zuns——?

INA

So now be a good girl. Think how bad you make God feel looking down on his little girl this bright lovely Sabbath morning and she's just home from Sunday School. Aren't you sorry to make God sorry?

VERNA

[In a penitent voice.]

Yes.

INA

There now, that's better.

[The bedroom door opens and Roy steps out. He stands regarding them with an expression on his face which INA recognizes all too well.]

INA

Oh—! Oh, Roy— I thought you was out—!

Verna darling, run see to the chicken for momma—
turn the burner down quick——!

[VERNA *saunters out, switching from side to side as she walks.*]

INA

Oh, Roy, now—! Oh, you *have*—! Oh, Roy—!
Come back and lie down. Stay lying down there,
Roy. Come, Roy—

ROY

What's the matter? Is my little Vernie back
from Sunday School?

INA

Yes. But come, Roy. Please!

[*She leads him back into the bedroom.*]

[VERNA *returns.*]

VERNA

[*Yelling.*]

It wasn't burning—I turned it down.

[INA *enters.*]

INA

Poppa's not feeling well, dear. Don't go in to
disturb him. Poppa's going to have one of his sick
spells, I'm afraid.

VERNA

Why don't you have the doctor?

INA

[*Vaguely.*]

If he gets worse——

[*She sits down quietly, sobered, sick at heart.*]

VERNA

Well, aren't we going to have dinner?

INA

Oh, yes. Come, I'll get you yours. Momma won't eat now—I don't feel hungry.

[*They start out. There is a knock at the front door. Verna has gone on. Ina returns to open the door. Mrs. Bascom enters. She is a woman of 40, thoroughly "settled" as to figure. A compact woman—compact as to mind as well as body.*]

INA

Oh, Mrs. Bascom, come in—come right in. Set down.

MRS. BASCOM

I just run in a minute——

INA

[*Turns to dining-room door and calls after*
VERNA.]

You go on, Vernie, and have your dinner.

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, mercy, haven't you had your dinner yet?—I didn't know——

INA

It's all right—set down. We are late—waiting for Vernie from Sunday School,—and then Doctor Bowman was took with a bad spell, one of his stom-mick spells—and kinda put us back——

MRS. BASCOM

I'm so sorry. I guess I better not stay.

INA

No, do sit down. I couldn't eat a mite, and Vernie's having hers. I'm real glad you stopped in.

MRS. BASCOM

I didn't see you to church. Rev. Johnson asked after you.

INA

I know I've been dreadful slack. What with one thing and another.

MRS. BASCOM

Did you hear 'bout that picnic some of the young folks had over to the Falls——?

INA

No!

MRS. BASCOM

They went in Jack Hines' touring car, and they come home at two o'clock in the morning, and they were smoking cigarettes, every one of the girls! And Jack Hines' cousin sez they won't admit it but she knows they took along two bottles of wine they got from the Italian over back of the depot that makes it!

INA

[*"Clucks" her tongue and shakes her head.*]
Do their mothers know?

MRS. BASCOM

I'd know what my daughters did! But some of the young people are terrible.

INA

Terrible!

[*She sees some one through the window.*]
Is that——? That's that Andrews woman——!

MRS. BASCOM

It is—it's her!

[*Both gaze after the Andrews woman.*]

She *looks* fast!

INA

You can *tell*!

MRS. BASCOM

She goes with the post master's wife and that crowd.

INA

They're not a very nice crowd.

MRS. BASCOM

Mrs. Hanson said to me the other day, well what if she *is* divorced, and divorced twice, that's nothing, she sez! Nothing—! You're old-fashioned, she sez. I hope I am, I sez. I'm respectable, I sez.

INA

Since this Mrs. Andrews moved in, and the post master's wife and that lot, the town ain't what it used to be.

MRS. BASCOM

They don't count though—they don't go to church, or belong to the church societies or any-

thing. It's the kind we know that counts—you know that!

INA

Yes. Are you going to call on that Mrs. Andrews?

MRS. BASCOM

Mercy no, I should hope not!

INA

Nor me neither.

MRS. BASCOM

'Course there are times when divorce is justified—just as the Bible has it—and for *Bible grounds*, but—still it leaves a kind of bad taste.

INA

You don't feel right about it.

MRS. BASCOM

Like in that moving picture last night— Did you go?

INA

No, I couldn't. I was that put out. I look forward all week to Sat'day and moving picture night. And then I went and missed it! I wisht they'd run 'em twice a week like they talked of doing.

MRS. BASCOM

It wouldn't pay, they say.

INA

I s'pose not. If you miss an episode it sets you back so— How did Doris get out of that airplane when the man had her up there and him so sordid and trying to make a fallen woman of her—? My goodness, I didn't sleep last Sat'day night! Did she escape his advances all right?

MRS. BASCOM

Yes, she escaped. The man—y'know, the one that's after her to ruin her, and o' course her really an heiress and he knows it—well, he couldn't steer the airplane very good because of his struggling there with Doris for her honor, y'see,—and just then along comes that other fella—y'know, the one's got blonde hair—and swoops down—and my lands, I never was so excited in my life—I was grabbing Joe by the arm, and Joe sez, my lands, Sade, what you doing?—this ain't actual, he sez. You'd 'a' died!

INA

Ye-uh. Well, did he rescue her and everything all right?

MRS. BASCOM

Ye-uh, he swooped up—and, oh, it was terrible—and grabbed her off, leaning out like, and he got her and she dangled— Oh! my heart stopped beating! And the other man crashed to earth.

INA

Well, thank goodness, Doris was saved all right!
[*She sits back.*]

MRS. BASCOM

Ye-uh, for a while. But then there was the man that was the other man's friend, and just as they was getting away all right—her and the blonde one—here along comes the *other* man, and he shoots the good-looking fella——

INA

[*A tragic cry.*]
Not the *blonde*——?

MRS. BASCOM

Ye-uh, but he didn't kill the blonde one. He recovers—it's only a flesh wound. But he gets Doris, and his advances ain't honorable neither—and he gets her into his submarine under the ocean, and there

they was struggling for her honor again—my goodness, I nearly died!

INA

[In a state of palpitating emotional excitement.]

And it ended like that?—oh, my goodness!

[Her cheeks are flushed, her eyes brightened—she is sitting forward on the edge of her chair.]

MRS. BASCOM

We'll see if she comes out all right next week or not.

INA

[Emitting a breath, slips back into dullness again.]

But a week—my goodness!

MRS. BASCOM

It was crowded last night.

INA

[Her eyes caught in the dream again.]

It's a wonderful picture . . . !

[*Then her countenance dulls once more.*]

My lands, the foolishness of us taking on so about just a made-up thing! I wonder if it *is* wrong . . . ?

MRS. BASCOM

Rev. Johnson goes.

INA

Yes. That's so.

[*Calls.*]

Vernie——

VERNA

[*Off.*]

Wh-ut——?

INA

Are you through, dear?

VERNA

Almost—not quie-ut.

INA

She's such a delicate child. She takes after her father. Doctor *looks* strong—he's such a well built man—but he's really delicate,—these spells . . . !

[*Her eyes go, anxiously, toward the bedroom door.*]

MRS. BASCOM

He ought to see a doctor more.

[*VERNA enters, licking the last drop of the gravy from her lip.*]

INA

[*With her company voice—her “mother’s little daughter” voice.*]

Did you make out a good dinner, darling? *Speak* to Mrs. Bascom.

VERNA

[*Sidling the other way.*]

Hullo.

[*Still sidling she slides into a chair, approaching it from the side, scraping her little buttocks against the arm instead of sitting squarely in the seat.*]

MRS. BASCOM

How is Vernie to-day?

[VERNA *grins broadly but sheepishly, and looks at her mother.*]

INA

Tell Mrs. Bascom you're very well, thank you.

VERNA

I'm very well, thank you.

MRS. BASCOM

How she grows!

INA

My, yes. She's momma's young lady. Sit up, dear!

[VERNA *has chosen the moment to slide her behind as far off the seat of the chair as she can, and still call it sitting down.*]

INA

Did you set the dinner back, and turn the burners out?

VERNA

Aw-ha.

INA

Say yes, ma'am.

VERNA

Yes, ma'am.

INA

[*Confidentially to Mrs. Bascom.*]
She's a help—a real help to me.

VERNA

Why can't I wear my white shoes?

INA

[*A hushed note to indicate reproval.*]
Not now, dear.

VERNA

Emma Green had her white shoes on.

INA

It looked like it might rain when you started. Do you want to spoil your nice white shoes?

VERNA

Everybody gets let wear their white shoes but me!

MRS. BASCOM

When all the other little girls' white shoes are wore out, yours will be new still, Vernie!

[VERNA *sulks the more; her face is a black cloud of surliness against Mrs. Bascom for butting in.*]

INA

There!—you hear what Mrs. Bascom says!

VERNA

I don't get let to do anything.

INA

[*Brightly.*]

Run over to Emma's and sit in their new spring hammick!

[VERNA'S *lips are pouted out like a negro's.*]

VERNA

Can I put my white shoes on if I do?

INA

Oh mercy, what a child you are! Yes, I suppose you can wear them now. But don't get them dirty.

[VERNA *runs out R.*]

I guess it won't rain now anyway.

[*A knock at the door.*]

Come in——

[MARGARET AVERY *enters. She is 35, thin, angular—a large, loose mouth that grimaces when she speaks and smiles.*]

INA

Come in, Margaret.

MARGARET

Hello. How d'do.

MRS. BASCOM

How d'do, Margaret.

MARGARET

I saw you across the church, Mis. Bascom. Well, did you hear about Rev. Sanderson T. Albaugh's coming——?

INA

No! Who?

MARGARET

Yes, he's coming this coming week. The Evangelist! The Tent Evangelist! He's wonderful they say!

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, yes, I meant to tell you! My cousin wrote me from Pomeroy—he was there! Did a great spiritual work in the community!

INA

A *Evangelist*——?

[VERNA *enters in her white shoes.*]

MARGARET

Hello, Vernie.

VERNA

Hello.

[*She goes out.*]

MARGARET

Yes. A revivalist. There's been great talk about him! But as Rev. Johnson sez, if he *saves souls* then he's doing a good work.

INA

Talk—how do you mean?

MARGARET

Well, his ways are—he's called sensational, y'know, they say he says terrible things right from the pulpit!

MRS. BASCOM

My cousin wrote me, they went forward in droves—droves!

MARGARET

Oh, he saves souls! There's nobody can question that.

INA

Then he's a servant of the Lord.

MARGARET

Oh, yes. He was there at church this morning with Rev. Johnson's family, in their pew. Didn't you see that stranger sitting in their pew?

MRS. BASCOM

I didn't notice—no. Wisht I had of!

INA

My, I wisht I'd gone this morning!

MARGARET

Rev. Johnson is seeing about the lot to put the tent on.

INA

A tent—my!

MARGARET

Yes, he's the Tent Evangel.

MRS. BASCOM

This town needs a real good spiritual revival!

INA

It certainly does. I haven't been to a revival—my, since I was a girl. It was to a revival that I came to Christ! What denomination is he?

MARGARET

Oh, not any!

INA

Not any?

MARGARET

No, Rev. Albaugh is just a good man and a great preacher. He ain't any church. He ain't a regular minister, y'see.

INA

Oh!

MARGARET

I just stopped in to tell you. I knew you wasn't to church.

INA

Thanks. Its good news to hear. If there's anything I can do to help——

MARGARET

They'll want us all to assist in prayers and the singing, I guess. And talk with those that haven't got the grace to go forward and work with 'em.

MRS. BASCOM

I wonder if they'd like the loan of my organ?

INA

We ought to fix up the pulpit kind of some way—
We'll borrow Mrs. Pinkham's palm.

MARGARET

[*Dubiously.*]

Ye-uh. It got broke though the last funeral that borrowed it, and Mis. Pinkham said she declared if she'd ever loan her palm again for nobody's funeral or even church, she said. It's getting all wore out, she said.

MRS. BASCOM

Well, there has been a lot of funerals.

MARGARET

You going too, Mis. Bascom?

MRS. BASCOM

Yes, I better.

INA

Drop in again soon.

[MARGARET and MRS. BASCOM go.]

[INA turns back, going to the bedroom door;
she opens it a little way, speaking through.]

INA

Roy—? Now, Roy, you aren't going to begin that,
are you, Roy?

ROY

Hum——?

INA

You aren't going to begin drinking again?

ROY

My stommick's bad.

[INA heaves a helpless sigh, and closes the door.
She sits, absently rocking. Verna returns.]

VERNA

Emma Green wasn't home—they've gone riding.

INA

[*Absently.*]

Hum—?

[VERNA dawdles about.]

INA

[*After a moment.*]

Vernie, let mamma hold you, Vernie——!

VERNA

Hold me——?

[*The note of derisive surprise in VERNA's exclamation tells how unusual is her mother's request.*]

INA

You're mamma's little girl just the same.

[*There is a note of begging appeal not to be refused underlying her words.*]

Come on, Vernie . . . ?

[VERNA rather self-consciously approaches her mother, and allows herself to be drawn into INA's arms, where she spraddles over. INA's arms wrap about her, trying to draw her close. Her eyes are brooding, and welling with emotion. She makes a little murmuring

sound, which becomes a humming half song. Verna submits. The proceeding is not much to her liking. Ina rocks a little. She is trying to sever contact with reality, to lose consciousness and withdraw into a moment's release from the pressure of life. She begins speaking in a little voice.]

Wouldn't it be nice, dear, to be way away off. . . .

VERNA

[Flat, practical, downright; she is in no need for escaping the pressure of life.]

Where?

INA

[Maintaining her withdrawnness against the attack by Verna's question.]

Way away off—in a handsome house with pillars up by the steps—and a rose garden—and Vernie would play all day on the lawn and go for rides——

[In spite of herself Verna is enticed by the picture; she lies quiet to hear what next.]

And momma's in the lovely house—momma's got new dresses, and a necklace, and a large touring car—and momma comes down the steps, and my dress is clinging soft gray georgette, and my hat's got a long curving feather—and the touring car is waiting

at the door, and the kind gentleman is smiling gently at mamma for keeping him waiting a little, but——

VERNA

Who's the kind gentleman?

[INA is brought back to reality; her face becomes a different face, resumes its usual look. After a moment she speaks in her usual voice.]

INA

Momma was just making things up.

[Her arms relax from around VERNA; her dulled-over eyes stare down at nothing.]

VERNA

Is the big house poppa's house?

INA

Jump down, dear, jump down. Momma can't sit here all day with you.

[She rises, lowering VERNA to her feet. The bedroom door opens and ROY appears. INA looks at him; VERNA retreats to the opposite side of the room, and watches her father in a

strange way—she recognizes something about him that is not normal.]

ROY

[Speaks after a moment; there is no evidence of alcoholism except a slightly thickened and careful utterance; his mood is serious and good tempered.]

Hello, Iny. My stomnick's still bad. Hello, Vernie. Hadn't you ought to be to Sunday School, little girl?

[VERNA looks to her mother to answer this.]

INA

She's been to Sunday School, Roy. I guess you've been to sleep. Poppa's been to sleep and forgot, dear. Hadn't you better go back and lie down again, Roy?

*[He makes no move to leave, nor to speak—
or to do anything but stand with a frowning
concentration on nothing.]*

Vernie, don't you want to go over and see if Emma's back yet?

VERNA

[Her eyes still on her father, covertly.]
She ain't yet.

.

INA

Well, you run along out and play. Poppa's quite sick, and he must be quiet.

[She herds Verna to the door, and out—the child backing along so that she can keep her eyes fixed on the strangeness in her father.]

INA

Oh, Roy . . . !

ROY

I'm all right. I guess I'll go back and lie down for a spell.

[He goes.]

[There is a knock. INA goes to the door and admits REV. JOHNSON and REV. SANDERSON T. ALBAUGH. Johnson is a slight man, with a red but thin, scraggy kind of face; a naturally irritable, unhappy disposition forced because of his choice of profession to be patient and to meet all moments with loving kindness; the strain of the conflict is wearing him down. INA backs away in flustered self-consciousness.]

INA

Oh!—oh, Rev. Johnson! Come in——

JOHNSON

Good afternoon, Sister Bowman. Brother Albaugh, let me make you acquainted with Mrs. Bowman. This is the Rev. Sanderson T. Albaugh, Sister Bowman.

[*The REV. SANDERSON T. ALBAUGH is 40 years old; a lithely muscular man; an unctuous intimate quality of voice, warm, urgent; vigorous, genial, magnetic; handsome of face only in so much as these qualities make for good looks. There is nothing ministerial about him; he suggests rather a cross between an actor and a business man. He is surcharged with vitality; his presence is like the silent but felt dynamics of a high-powered motor. His speech comes in a ready, easy flow of words, gratingly suave.*]

ALBAUGH

[*Shaking hands.*]

Glad to meet you, Sister Bowman—mighty glad indeed! It is a pleasure indeed to step into a little home like this, nestling here in this little city, where motherhood and love of Jesus shine in the very way your windows are washed. Yes, sir—I can tell a Christian home by the washing on the line! Ha-a-a-a!

[*He laughs his ready, unctuous, embracing laugh.*]

You won't find me a regular parson, Sister Bowman.

[*Slaps JOHNSON on the back by way of apology.*]

With all due respect to our brother here—no, I am one of God's freaks—I'm God's side show. I'm a go-getter for the Lord! Ain't that right, Brother Johnson?

[*BROTHER JOHNSON grins his confirmation.*]

I'm out to put Jesus Christ on the map. And I'm going to do it right here in Spring Valley. Yes, sir, beginning to-morrow night, next week is going to be God's week—Amen.

JOHNSON

[*Chiming in a little late, but it is his intention to keep in the band wagon.*]

Amen!

ALBAUGH

No, I ain't a regular parson—but somehow I think the Lord has forgive me for dragging in souls by their heels and the seat o' their pants! 'Cause that's the way I get 'em! Soon's He counted up, Brother Albaugh, He said, it's all right—pardon me—my mistake— You go right on and gather 'em in, He says. One hundred seventy three saved last week to Osgohoola. Two hundred and five week before that. That's the record! It's results counts. And I get

'em. Beautiful little place you got here, Sister,—
a God-fearing Christian home.

INA

[*Has stood almost dismayed, but fascinated,
during the flow of ALBAUGH's speech.*]

Oh—er— Well we—Rev. Johnson knows I try to
do my best——

JOHNSON

I'll tell you why we called specially this afternoon,
Sister Bowman. We——

ALBAUGH

Yes, he'll tell you why we called. I don't mean to
intrude my humble self, a stranger in your midst
like this—except on business, God's business—Amen.

JOHNSON

Yes, we——

[*Then bethinking himself.*]

Amen—! We came to see Doctor Bowman, about
his lot—the lot he owns over in back of the coal
sheds. Brother Albaugh would like to pitch his
tent there——

ALBAUGH

[*Taking the words out of his Brother's mouth.*]

I hold my meetings in a tent, Sister—I'm a Tent Evangel. All I ask is the lot of bare ground to pitch God's tent on.

INA

Why, I'm sure——

[*The door opens and ROY enters; INA gives a little gasp of apprehension.*]

ROY

Good afternoon, Rev. Johnson. I was lying down for a little Sunday afternoon snooze, I got a kind of bad stommick, and I heard your conversation—Rev. Albaugh, I'm glad to make your acquaintance, sir!

ALBAUGH

Brother Bowman? Ah, Brother Bowman, I am glad indeed to shake your hand, glad indeed!

ROY

You're very welcome to the lot. Take it and welcome. All I ask is don't drive in over the board sidewalk—drive in the other way, where there's a gap in the sidewalk, kind o' breaks it down.

ALBAUGH

Your wishes shall be respected. And I thank you for the Lord, Brother Bowman.

ROY

Don't mention it. The favor is mine. I am the gainer. The lot is yours—take it—use it—it's yours for the week and no rental charge.

ALBAUGH

Well, Brother Johnson, that is settled then.

JOHNSON

Very kind of you, Doctor.

ROY

Favor's mine.

ALBAUGH

Now I'm afraid we must be moving on. Nothing would please me more than to spend the afternoon under this hospitable Christian roof. But my valise is to the depot, and I must find me a boarding place before the afternoon is over. Brother Johnson has some place in mind, I believe.

JOHNSON

Yes, I was going to go to——

ROY

[*Very expansive this afternoon.*]

Boarding place?—Iny, offer Rev. Albaugh that room there if he'd take it. Glad and honored to have you.

INA

Why, yes—I'd be ever so pleased and proud, but I don't know—we live very plain, it's just a plain room——

ALBAUGH

Nothing could please me more, Sister, nothing! I am delighted! Brother Johnson, what true Christian hospitality!

JOHNSON

Very kind and hospitable of Brother Bowman.

ALBAUGH

We'll stop by the depot and get my valise——

JOHNSON

Don't you stir. I'll get it. He's been traveling all night.

ROY

Rev. Johnson and I'll get it. Rev. Albaugh, you set right there.

ALBAUGH

That's very kind—very kind. How can I thank you?

ROY

By making yourself right to home.
[*He and JOHNSON leave.*]

INA

It's just a plain room, I'm afraid——

ALBAUGH

Don't apologize. After the traveling I've done, and sleeping in hotel beds! Up all last night to make the trip here to be ready to start the Lord's work prompt. Yes, Sister Bowman, I live a homeless life. Yet I am happy in it—happy! To labor in the Vineyard—what more can any poor sinful

man ask? Where the laborers are few. But the spiritual rewards are rich. When I see the repentant souls come forward to give themselves to Christ, then I cry, thank God—Amen!

INA

Amen!

[Throughout, since ALBAUGH's entrance, INA has sat as if transfixed, her eyes on ALBAUGH like a dog's on its master. During this last speech, her hands have clasped, her eyes have stung with tears, her gaze has adoration in it.]

ALBAUGH

[Continues; she is a good audience; he begins this time in a lower, confidentially emotional key; he is unconsciously histrionic.]

Sister, if I should tell you the sorrowing sinful hearts that are brought to me in my work!

[Louder, stronger.]

If I should tell you of the *glory* when those repentant sinners come to their Saviour.

[His voice vibrant with masculine ecstasy.]

Oh, the blood shed for us—the blood of the Lamb

—the blood that can wash the blackest sinner white!
God is merciful—Jesus can save!

[INA *is quivering with responsive emotion, all
but sobbing.*]

There's times without number when I have plead
for seven hours with sinners—plead without food or
rest—seven hours on end I have exhorted souls to
give them grace. And at the last when the very
blackest sinner steeped in defilement—when his heart
has melted and been washed in the blood! When I
have been able to look up to my Master in Heaven
and say, Father, here they are—take them to Thy
breast. Then—and only then—have I dropped
where I stood—dropped in my tracks—right there
in the pulpit. But oh what joy to give your strength
to God's service! But these are things that a
worker in the Vineyard must expect——

INA

Oh, if—if I could only do something—to help
you——!

ALBAUGH

Give me your prayers, Sister.

INA

I'll pray night and day for you—I'll never stop

praying for you, Rev. Albaugh. You—you're—you're——

[*Hushed—reverent.*]

you're like Christ . . . !

ALBAUGH

Oh, no—no. I'm only a poor humble sinner like all of us.

[*He glances down at his shoes.*]

Look at those shoes—how far I've tramped in them—I'm embarrassed coming into your tidy house with such dirty shoes.

INA

Oh, that's all right—that's nothing.

ALBAUGH

I believe I'll take a little nap now, if I may.

INA

Yes—there's the room. I'm afraid you'll find it just a very plain room——

ALBAUGH

I'll stretch out for forty winks. And don't worry about your bed spread—I'll take my dirty shoes off.

Oh, I know you good housekeepers, you see! And say—let me have Brother Bowman's blacking brush and I'll shine 'em up a little, too.

INA

Oh—let me—I'll do it——!

ALBAUGH

I couldn't think of that, Sister.

INA

Please—it's nothing—I'll clean them for you while you're taking your nap. Just set 'em outside the door. It's nothing——

ALBAUGH

You're very thoughtful indeed. Ah, what a nice room! This is very nice.

INA

I hope you'll find it comfortable. It's just a very plain——

[He goes in and closes the door—the end of her sentence trails off unspoken. She remains with her eyes fastened on the door through which he has gone. She is enthralled,

entranced. In a moment ALBAUGH's door opens a little way, and he puts the shoes out.]

ALBAUGH

I'm ashamed of the looks o' these shoes——!

[INA's breath catches until he has closed his door again. Then she crosses to the shoes and takes them up. She stands, her eyes fixed absently, the shoes drawn up to her breast.]

CURTAIN



ACT II







SCENE FROM ACT II

ACT II

Same scene.

The following Saturday evening.

[VERNA enters from the porch.]

VERNA

Mom-ma—! Mom-ma——!

[Calls through the dining room door.]

Mom-ma—ain't supper ready?

[Goes out, still calling with a growing irritation.]

Momma, ain't supper ready yet?—where are you?
—Mom-ma——!

[She returns surly, exasperated, eating a cracker, and sniffing a little.]

[ROY appears from the bedroom; he is alcoholic, but speaks connectedly.]

ROY

Where's your mother?

VERNA

I don't know.

ROY

What you yelling so for?

[VERNA pouts her mouth, eyes him surlily and suspiciously askance, and is stubbornly silent.]

What time is it?

VERNA

It's after six o'clock.

ROY

You mustn't yell like that—Rev. Albaugh is taking a nap before the evening service.

VERNA

I don't care.

ROY

Where's your mother?

[VERNA is silent—it exasperates her all the more to hear him repeat the question she has answered once.]

ROY

Where's your mother?—it's time she had supper ready, ain't it?

VERNA

[Spitting the words at him—yelling it.]

I told you I don't know!

[Mutters to herself, half fearing he will hear what she says, and yet wanting the satisfaction of knowing that he does hear.]

Old fool——!

ROY

What?

[His befuddled mind does not press the matter.]

Ain't supper ready?

VERNA

How can supper be ready when mamma ain't here even!

ROY

Where is she?

VERNA

[This has gone beyond VERNA's ability to meet with a retort sufficiently scathing; so for reply she sings impertinently to herself.]

"Oh Beulah land—sweet Beulah land——"

ROY

[Speaking through the hymn.]

What's come over your mother I'd like to know——!

VERNA

[Her voice rises.]

“Upon the highest mount I stand——”

ROY

Shut up, I tell you. You'll disturb Rev. Albaugh. Has your mother gone to the meeting again?

VERNA

Meeting ain't till half past seven.

ROY

[Puts his hands into his pockets feeling for money; draws his hands out empty—nonplussed.]

Where's my money? I had my money in m' pants! Where's my money?

[Goes back into the bedroom to look for it.]

VERNA

“I look away across the sea—where mansions are prepared for me——”

ROY

[Returns.]

My money's gone—I've lost my money!

VERNA

Oh, poppa, don't be silly, you ain't lost your money—its somewheres!

ROY

I had it in m' pants pocket! I wanted you to run down to the drug store and get me some bromo seltzer—I got a bad headache from my stommick.

VERNA

They'll charge it.

ROY

Yes, but I don't want to ask to charge it—I had words about my last bill.

VERNA

I'll loan it to you out of my bank, but you got to pay me back.

ROY

All right, Vernie—fifty cents.

[She goes to get her bank.]

I'll pay you back soon's I find my money. Gosh darn it, that's the funniest thing!

[VERNA returns shaking her bank, her face aghast and puckering for a howl.]

VERNA

Poppa—poppa! My bank's empty—it's empty! I had nine dollars saved up—I'd lost count but 'bout that much— Poppa, its empty—Oh—h!

[*She howls.*]

ROY

[*Shakes the bank.*]

Well, for gosh sake! Well for—! Say, who's been in this house? For gosh sake! Don't cry, Vernie, we'll find it. Where's your mother anyhow!

VERNA

Oh-h-h!

ROY

Oh, shut up your howling!

[*Goes into bedroom—to his solace—and slams the door.*]

[VERNA shakes her empty bank to the accompaniment of her subsiding wails.]

[INA enters from the street. She is in a state of hysteria, but with no obvious evidences of

it; she is outwardly controlled; so far as Verna perceives she is the same mother she has always known.]

VERNA

Mom-ma, my bank money's been stole—mom-ma!

INA

Stolen?—Why, Vernie! Your bank?

VERNA

It's empty—look.

INA

Never mind dear, momma will give you money to put in again. Don't cry, dear—momma'll give it to you!

VERNA

Will you, honest?

INA

Honest.

VERNA

But who took my money?

INA

Don't cry now, dear—you'll disturb Rev. Albaugh.

VERNA

Where've you been? Supper ain't ready. I'm hungry—it's way past supper time.

INA

Momma had to go uptown.

VERNA

Well, get supper now!

INA

Hush, Vernie, hush. Go out in the kitchen. I'll get it—yes. Go light the stove.

[VERNA goes.]

[INA secretly takes out a shining new gold watch and chain from its box. She gazes at it with a glow of joy, lost in the dream with which the watch is connected in her mind; she breathes on it; polishes it. Looks toward ALBAUGH'S room, and puts the watch away in her bag.]

[VERNA bursts into the room again.]

VERNA

Why, momma, you did have supper all ready and put away! Oh, momma, it looks good. M-m-m!

[Rubs her stomach with a rotary movement of her hand.]

INA

Don't touch anything on that tray! That's Rev. Albaugh's supper.

VERNA

[Her face droops with disappointed hunger.]

Oh-h, momma! Can't I have any of that fried chicken and ca-uk? Oh now, momma!

[INA bustles out to the dining room, followed by VERNA still yawping.]

Momma, I'm so hungry— Oh momma—can't I have any?

[INA returns carrying a tray temptingly filled with food.]

[VERNA follows close at her heels.]

INA

Hush, Verna, hush. I'll get you something. There's cold beans there—and there's bread and butter.

VERNA

[Her eyes fixed famishingly on the tray.]
Oh, mom-ma!

INA

[Fiercely.]
Hush! I'll get you something in a minute. Be still now.
[She crosses to ALBAUGH's door and knocks gently.]

ALBAUGH

Yes?

INA

Rev. Albaugh, will you have a little supper?—I fixed a snack for you.
[He opens the door.]

ALBAUGH

Ah, how very nice. What a feast!

INA

It's just a snack. I'm afraid it's not to your taste, Rev. Albaugh, but——

ALBAUGH

Fried chicken!

[VERNA, *hanging against the couch at the other side of the room, watches with envious eyes; as he mentions each article of food, she gulps as her mouth waters.*]

Cold slaw—delicious cold slaw!

INA

A little potato salad——

ALBAUGH

Layer cake!

INA

Cocoanut layer—a glass of milk,—if you'd rather have tea, the kettle's on—it won't take a minute!

ALBAUGH

This is a supper for a king!

INA

It'll help to give you strength for your last service to-night.

I hope you'll be able to eat it.

[He takes the tray into the room and closes the door.]

VERNA

[The moment the door is closed, she wails.]

Momma, I want some cold fried chicken—just a leg! I want a piece of layer cake, momma!

INA

Now don't be a greedy girl. It's for Rev. Albaugh. Rev. Albaugh is company. And think what Rev. Albaugh's work is.

VERNA

When did you make the cake, momma? And please can't I have a piece?

INA

You can have one piece of cake. But don't touch what's left of the chicken—Rev. Albaugh'll want a second helping maybe. Eat the beans and warm up that nice piece of fried liver there.

[VERNA goes. There is a knock.]

INA

Come in.

[MRS. BASCOM and MARGARET AVERY enter.]

MRS. BASCOM

[In a hushed, reverent voice.]

How is Rev. Albaugh?

INA

[Self-conscious, and enjoying her importance as the dispenser of this news, and of her position as chatelaine to the evangelist.]

Rev. Albaugh's resting just now. And having his supper. I just now took his supper to him. I fix it for him on a tray, so's he can have it right by his bedside if he feels like.

[The visiting ladies receive each item of news with suitable impressed attention.]

MRS. BASCOM

Does he eat well?

INA

Oh—yes, fairly. But it's spiritual food that keeps up his great strength!

MARGARET

Oh, yes—yes, indeed!

INA

He's a man of marvelous strength. A very power-

ful man physically. He'd have to be to give himself to his preaching like he does! He has such powerful arms——

MARGARET

[*Agape with interest.*]

Has he?

INA

Great strength! Powerfully developed muscles.

MARGARET

Yes, he looks that way.

MRS. BASCOM

His spiritual work makes a great call on his physical strength.

INA

But he has the physical strength—that's it! He's like a man of iron! He could break me in two with his one hand.

MARGARET

His wonderful speaking voice! I've never heard such a wonderful delivery.

INA

Oh, yes. His great chest development helps his speaking, of course. If it wasn't for his great development Rev. Albaugh couldn't ever carry on his spiritual ministrations like he does!

MRS. BASCOM

The town's like another town from this week of prayer and praise.

MARGARET

Three hundred and over converted, and the last great night to-night!

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, religion is a living force!

[INA receives this with a becoming pride, almost as though she participated in the honors.]

INA

Oh, yes, indeed, Rev. Albaugh has done a great work.

MRS. BASCOM

And little Vernie's conversion! Ain't it wonderful the way that little child stands right up there and her little voice leads in prayer?

INA

Oh, yes. Christ has sanctified Vernie. She's saved. Last night after we come home from the meeting Vernie was so filled with the holy spirit that she couldn't sleep—she kept calling out to Jesus all the night. And then after a while she'd speak in tongues.

MRS. BASCOM

Speak in tongues? How you mean?

INA

Oh, yes. Didn't you know? Wasn't you there the night that Vernie spoke in tongues? Why, she began to confess her sins, and asking God to soften her heart and be washed in the blood, and then all of a sudden-like she began to speak funny words—just like gibberish. But Rev. Albaugh knew—he rose up and explained. She was speaking in tongues—yes!

MARGARET

I heard the child.

INA

And for upwards of two hours she was speaking in tongues last night again.

MARGARET

Does Rev. Albaugh write his sermons in there, or out here?

INA

Oh, he doesn't write 'em out—no! It's inspiration!

MRS. BASCOM

That kind of inspiration preaching can't be wrote. Why, what's that?

[*She has just noticed a candle in a fancy candlestick.*]

INA

That? Why, I wanted something kind of nice to fix up the house a little—Rev. Albaugh being here—my things look so shabby,—and——

MRS. BASCOM

A *candle!*—how funny!

INA

Well, yes, it is kind of funny, I guess.

MRS. BASCOM

Rev. Albaugh'll think you're Roman Catholic if you don't look out! Whatever possessed you to buy a candle?

INA

I don't know—honestly. I wanted something nice and tasty to fix the house up a little. I didn't *go* to buy a candle! I was looking around at Parker's new art department to the Dry Goods store, and Miss Jennings sez those candles are all the go east, she sez, very artistic. And I just kind of laughed and went on looking, and—I don't know—I did buy the candle. I think it's artistic. If you don't have a cross anywheres it don't make it Roman Catholic—it's just artistic.

MRS. BASCOM

Yes, I s'pose. It *is* artistic.

[Roy *enters.*]

ROY

Good evening.

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, good evening, Doctor.

MARGARET

Good evening.

INA

Is your stommick feeling any better, Roy? Doctor's having one of his bad spells.

[MRS. BASCOM *and* MARGARET *exchange a look.*]

ROY

My stommick's terrible. Well, I don't mind telling you that I'm glad this here week's revival is nearly over.

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, Dr. Bowman!

INA

Why, Roy!

ROY

Well, I maintain it! Such goings-on! 'Tain't natural!

MRS. BASCOM

[*Horrifed.*]

Oh!

INA

Now, Roy!

ROY

No, sir! I was there. I was to the meetings. I see Vernie going on like that! 'Tain't natural.

[The two callers are reprovngly silent, with grim mouths.]

Rev. Albaugh is an earnest man—a godly man—I ain't denying it. But when——

INA

[With an intensity that trembles upon the verge of a breakdown.]

He's God's anointed—God's own anointed, Roy Bowman!

ROY

He's a powerful preacher—but things goes too far down to that tent!

MARGARET

Three hundred and fifty souls saved for Christ since last Monday night and the great harvest to come this evening—is that going too far I'd just like to ask?

ROY

Well—that's all right—but just the same things goes too far. Vernie's nerves are all upset. First

thing you know all this will bring back her St. Vitus' dance again like she was troubled with two summers ago.

INA

[Suddenly whips out at him with low-voiced, virulent unction of rage.]

You're a low, ignorant drunken sot, Roy Bowman, to say such things!

[The two women gasp at this.]

ROY

[Keeping an even temper, but keeping it stubbornly.]

I maintain what I say.

INA

I don't want to listen to one more word of your blasphemy!

[Her face is livid, her eyes pin points of fury at him.]

ROY

I maintain that things goes too far. You don't call it going too far when a respectable married woman gets up in an open meeting and tears her dress open, exposing her form before the hull tentful?

INA

She never did!

ROY

I seen her.

INA

And if she did it was giving herself to God!

ROY

You don't call it going too far when our respectable citizens—men and women—rise up and scream and jump and froth at the mouth, and have paroxysms?—I do! I call it going too far. And then fall down right in the aisle, and lay there stiff like corpses? I call it going too far.

MRS. BASCOM

You don't understand. It's God working in their sinful hearts.

INA

It would be better for you, Roy Bowman, if you should give yourself a little to the spirit of Christ that works in those sinful breasts!

ROY

I maintain it's going too far. And what about

poor old Miss Nettie Allen being took to the insane asylum yesterday just from getting overwrought up at the tent? I maintain that's going too far.

INA

You're in a state you don't know what you're saying, or God would strike you dead, Roy Bowman!

ROY

[As he goes back to his room.]

I know what I'm saying.

[He closes the door.]

[There is a strained, tense silence between the three women.]

INA

[Suddenly crying.]

I can't help it! He's like that! You don't know what I have to put up with! I hate him! I loathe him—great big soft-bellied old hulk! I'd die if I had to touch him ever again! I hate him—I hate him! I wish the Lord might strike him down!—soft, greasy, pudgy old nasty thing!

[She is trembling, and sobbing hysterical tears.]

[The two women are exchanging looks—yet almost ashamed to look at each other. They are getting an earful indeed, yet this is almost too much of a good thing. They don't

*quite know how to handle the moment.
Gradually INA quiets.]*

INA

You mustn't pay any attention to what I say!
I'm just so worn to a frazzle! I been under such
a strain.

MRS. BASCOM

Why, that's all right.

INA

I can't pretend any more though—he does drink
—you know it now.

MRS. BASCOM

Well—it's just your cross, Mis. Bowman.

INA

But you won't let it go any further, will you?

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, mercy, no!

MARGARET

Never!

INA

I'm so ashamed! A drinking man!

MRS. BASCOM

I'd leave him!

INA

Oh, mercy! No! I couldn't. It seems so awful to be separated, or divorced— Oh, I couldn't get a divorce! I'd never be able to hold my head up again!

MRS. BASCOM

I know how you feel.

INA

A church member divorced—my, no!

MRS. BASCOM

You're a brave Christian woman.

INA

Rev. Albaugh has given me strength.

MRS. BASCOM

It's getting along towards time for the service, and we got several to see, Margaret. Mis. Bowman, we

called in to tell you that we are getting up a little token of respect for Rev. Albaugh, and we thought you'd like to subscribe?

[INA is stiff with a swift resentment.]

INA

[Coldly, sharply.]

What you getting him?

MRS. BASCOM

We thought a handsome watch would be nice and appropriate.

INA

A watch!

MARGARET

We've got forty-seven dollars subscribed now, and we need thirteen more to get it before the store closes to-night to present it.

INA

How much you paying then—sixty dollars?

MARGARET

Yes.

INA

I can't give anything. Nope.

[*Her face shuts up into a tight mask.*]

MRS. BASCOM

We thought Rev. Albaugh staying here and all——

INA

I can't give anything.

[*An awkward moment of silence.*]

MRS. BASCOM

Oh—well—all right.

[*They move to go.*]

INA

A sixty-dollar watch.

MRS. BASCOM

There's one there at ninety dollars that we'd *like* to get, but——

MARGARET

No, that one's gone!

MRS. BASCOM

Oh—gone?

MARGARET

It's been just bought this evening. So we couldn't get it anyhow.

[INA's face betrays nothing, except a gleam in her eye.]

MRS. BASCOM

Oh, well—I guess about sixty is all we can raise, anyway. Well—we must get on. Good night.

MARGARET

Good night.

INA

Good night.

[She waits without moving till they are out. Then taking her watch out she goes to ALBAUGH'S door, glancing anxiously towards ROY'S door as she does so. She knocks.]
[ALBAUGH comes out.]

ALBAUGH

Guess it is most meeting time, Sister Ina.

INA

[Speaking rapidly, low.]
Rev. Albaugh, I wanted to give you a little some-

thing—please take this—it's nothing—just from me——

[She drops the watch into his hand.]

ALBAUGH

What?—why, it's beautiful—a watch!

INA

S-sh!

ALBAUGH

[Lowering his voice, they speak hushed.]

Why, Ina. . . .

[At the intimate use of her name for the first time she draws in her breath sharply, and a tremor runs through her.]

INA

'Tain't much—just to remember by——

[With a low, terrible intensity.]

You will remember, won't you, Rev. Albaugh?

[For reply he closes his hand against her upper arm in a caress. At the touch she stiffens convulsively, and gives a sobbing intake of breath through clenched jaws, starting back a step away from him.]

ALBAUGH

There—there! It's all right . . . I know . . . be careful . . .

[*INA stands with her arms stiffened at her sides, her eyes closed against the stinging tears, shuddering.*]

Be careful . . . !

INA

[*Still with closed eyes.*]

You won't ever forget—being here? and me . . . ?

ALBAUGH

Never!

[*His impulse is to touch her again, but he realizes that it is better not; he moves away.*]

You're a noble little woman. I'll—I'll pray for you always.

INA

Yes—I want your prayers—give your prayers to me—fill me with your prayers—fill me—I'm weak—I need your strong prayers—I need the fountain of your prayers!

ALBAUGH

All right now . . . wait . . . I better get to the meeting.

INA

[*Breathless.*]

Yes—yes!

ALBAUGH

It's been a wonderful week—you've been wonderful—a great help—you've helped me, Sister Ina. Sit near to the front to-night—so's I can get the help from your spirit—it helps me. . . .

[*She stands now with her hands clasped at her breast, rapt.*]

INA

Yes, I will—I will, Rev. Albaugh— Whatever you tell me I'll do—whatever—tell me more what I can do for you in Christ!

ALBAUGH

I better go now—I better go.

[*He goes out; his manner is somewhat that of stumbling blindly.*]

[*INA becomes a little faint, unsteady; she leans up against the wall, dizzy—then goes to the window where she can watch him as he goes down the street.*]

[*The curtain falls to indicate the passing of a few hours and then rises again.*]

[*INA comes in from the street. Her face is*

ravaged, her hair straying, her eyes over-bright. She is still in the grip of the ecstatic frenzy of the past two hours. She walks feverishly about the room, coming up against the wall as though she did not realize she was walking into it; then she turns and darts another way. It is not her physical movement that is rapid, it is rather that the pace within her is violent. Her lips are moving with utterances of religious ecstasy, breaking into phrases of the hymns. She makes clutching gestures at her breast, then throwing her arms out in a wide gesture.]

INA

Holy . . . holy . . . blessed Jesus . . . blessed
Jesus . . . Amen . . . Jehovah will save . . . Jesus
will sanctify. . . holy . . . holy . . . cry his name
. . . Hallelujah . . . sanctified . . .

[She sings.]

Amen . . . blessed Saviour . . . Jesus will save
. . . Hallelujah . . . Amen. . . .

[She grows quiet; her mind moves a step toward normalness. She straightens herself, brushes her hair back, smooths her face down with her hands, emits a long breath. Her look goes to the bedroom door. She crosses to it and looks in. The vituperative hatred comes into her voice.]

Lie there—lie there—drunken sot—lie there—
stink there—sot—drunken sot—soft old flabby sot—
lie there!

[Closes the door.]

*[VERNA enters; she is like the frayed out end of
a dish rag. Her voice is high and squeaking
from overstrained nerves, and nerve ex-
haustion.]*

VERNA

Momma, I wanted to wait and walk home with
Rev. Albaugh.

INA

Well, why didn't you? Where is he—ain't he
coming?

VERNA

They was such a crowd around him I couldn't get
near him—they wouldn't let me through to get to
Rev. Albaugh!

*[She falls against the couch to wail, her face
buried against the seat of the couch.]*

INA

Hush up—hush! You must go to bed, Vernie.
You've been up late every night this week.

[She asks suddenly, sharply.]

Did they present him with that old watch of theirs?

VERNA

I think that's what they were doing.

INA

I wouldn't stay! Sixty-dollar watch—huh! Let 'em persent it to him! Let 'em! Vernie, stop that and go to bed this minute!

VERNA

I want to wait up for Rev. Albaugh.

INA

You can't.

VERNA

I want to wait up for Rev. Albaugh.

INA

You can't, I say. What for anyhow?

VERNA

I want him to pray for me.

INA

You've prayed enough—all week—you'll make yourself sick.

VERNA

I'm afrai-ud.

INA

Afraid of what?

VERNA

I'm afraid I'll die before I wake and my soul will be lost— Oh-h-h!

INA

You ain't going to die. Shut up. And you're saved anyhow. You know you are.

VERNA

I *am* going to die— I *am*—I *am*!
[*Stamps her foot, raging with howls.*]

INA

You ain't.

VERNA

I am.

INA

You ain't, I say.

VERNA

I am—I am.

INA

You're a great, big, strong, bad girl.

VERNA

I want Rev. Albaugh to pray for me—I'm afrai-ud.

INA

Go to bed—run along—I'll ask Rev. Albaugh to pray for you.

VERNA

Promise?

INA

Honest and true, cross my heart. Come—run along now. Momma'll come in after a little.

[VERNA goes out R. and then returns, hanging around the door.]

What is it now?

VERNA

I want a piece of layer cake.

INA

No.

VERNA

Yes!

INA

I said no!

VERNA

Oh plee-uz—I want a piece of layer ca-uk.

INA

Just a little piece then.

[VERNA is gone on the second, all howls instantaneously shut off.]

[INA waits for ALBAUGH'S return. Soon she hears what she knows to be his step; she is instantly keyed to a high tension. ALBAUGH enters.]

ALBAUGH

Well—back again.

[He drops into a chair, exhausted.]

INA

What can I get you, Rev. Albaugh?

ALBAUGH

A glass of milk, thanks——

[INA rushes out to wait on him. He sits with his thoughts. INA returns with a tray on which are a glass of milk and a piece of cake.]

INA

This ain't very much. Can't I get you something hot, Rev. Albaugh?

ALBAUGH

No, thanks—just a snack. I'm a pretty tired man.

[INA's eyes envelop him.]

INA

[In a pinched voice.]

Did they give it to you?

ALBAUGH

Huh? Oh—a watch—yes. Yes, they did. Very kind of the sisters and brethren.

[A pause.]

INA

You had mine all the time didn't you?

ALBAUGH

Yes. . . .

[*A silence between them.*]

Yes—yes, I had yours, Sister. . . .

INA

You'll always keep mine, won't you? You'll wear theirs for show, won't you?

ALBAUGH

Yours means more to me—of course. . . .

[*The silence between them again.*]

I must get a good rest to-night. What with catching that early train in the morning—

INA

[*Her face draws, she catches her under lip with her teeth.*]

Have you got to go then?

ALBAUGH

My call is to Winterville by to-morrow.

INA

[*A choked sob.*]

I can't bear your leaving!—it'll be awful!—it'll

be awful! It'll be like a grave here!—and me in it!
—it'll be awful!

ALBAUGH

No—no. Come now. We all have our crosses to bear.

INA

Some things is too much.

[*The silence again.*]

If I could travel along—if I could be a help——!

ALBAUGH

Ina——!

INA

I could play the organ—I could get your snack nights—! I want to serve Christ too——!

ALBAUGH

But, Ina—we dassent!

INA

You don't want me! You're glad to leave!

ALBAUGH

Iny! don't say that!—it's terrible hard for me to go—too. . . .

INA

[*Almost a cry of triumph in her voice.*]
It is . . . ?

ALBAUGH

It'd be wonderful that way—if it could be—us
two working for the Lord together side by side—
doing the Lord's work—you and me, Iny!—*Oh, God!*
[*Suddenly covers his face.*]

[*This is too much for INA's overstrained emotions. She drops on her knees before him.*]

INA

Oh, Rev. Albaugh—I want you—I can't live without I got with you——!

[*Her hands are fluttering over him, over his head and bent shoulders, fearful to clasp, yet instinctively caressing.*]

I'll die left here—Rev. Albaugh! I got to be with you——! I don't know—I got to be with you——!

ALBAUGH

No—no—no!

INA

You know what it's like here—you've seen things—I don't need to tell you—he's lying there now dead drunk—he's awful—I hate him so—I love you, Rev.

Albaugh—I love you in our blessed Saviour—I worship you—I'll be your slave—walk on me—I'll worship you! I've got to. . . .

ALBAUGH

[Takes his hands from before his face now, and grips her hands; their hot faces close—wild—frenzied.]

Ina—Ina—for God's sake—Ina—we can't—we dassent—Ina——!

[As he speaks he is raising her—she is limp, following his movement.]

I never . . . any woman like you—! We got to remember what's right——

INA

Take me—take me——

ALBAUGH

You're sweet—Iny. Iny. . . . You're my honey little bride. . . .

INA

Take me—take me——

ALBAUGH

We dassent do things, Ina— We got to remember—we got to remember——

INA

Take me—take me——

ALBAUGH

My soft honey sweet—little bride girl. . . .

[She all but swoons in his arms. Suddenly with a convulsive movement, he regains something of his control—he pushes her from him—puts her in a chair.]

God!

[INA crouches whimpering, murmuring.]

Ina—we got to remember—we can't—Oh-h!

I got to go now!

[INA gives a moaning cry.]

Don't—don't—! I'll get my valise—there's a late train—due now—lemme get on it——!

[Goes into the room.]

INA

Don't—oh—don't leave me—I can't stay here——!

[He returns with his valise.]

ALBAUGH

Iny—we got to remember—I got to go for your sake——!

INA

I don't matter—but you mustn't do anything!
It's for your sake! Yes—you go—! Hurry—you'll
miss the train——!

ALBAUGH

No, I got time—it's only two squares down——

INA

Write a letter to me—! Oh, how can I ever get
along——!

ALBAUGH

Pray, my Iny—pray for strength—seek your
Saviour——!

INA

Good-by——

ALBAUGH

I don't dast to kiss you—!

[He kisses her—dashes out.]

*[INA takes a few reeling steps, then falls to her
knees.]*

INA

Our Father in Heaven—Blessed Jesus—Thy Son
—Take me—take me—Amen—Jesus walking in
light—Jesus the Son—take me—fill me—Thy blood
—wash me in the blood—Praise God the Lamb—the

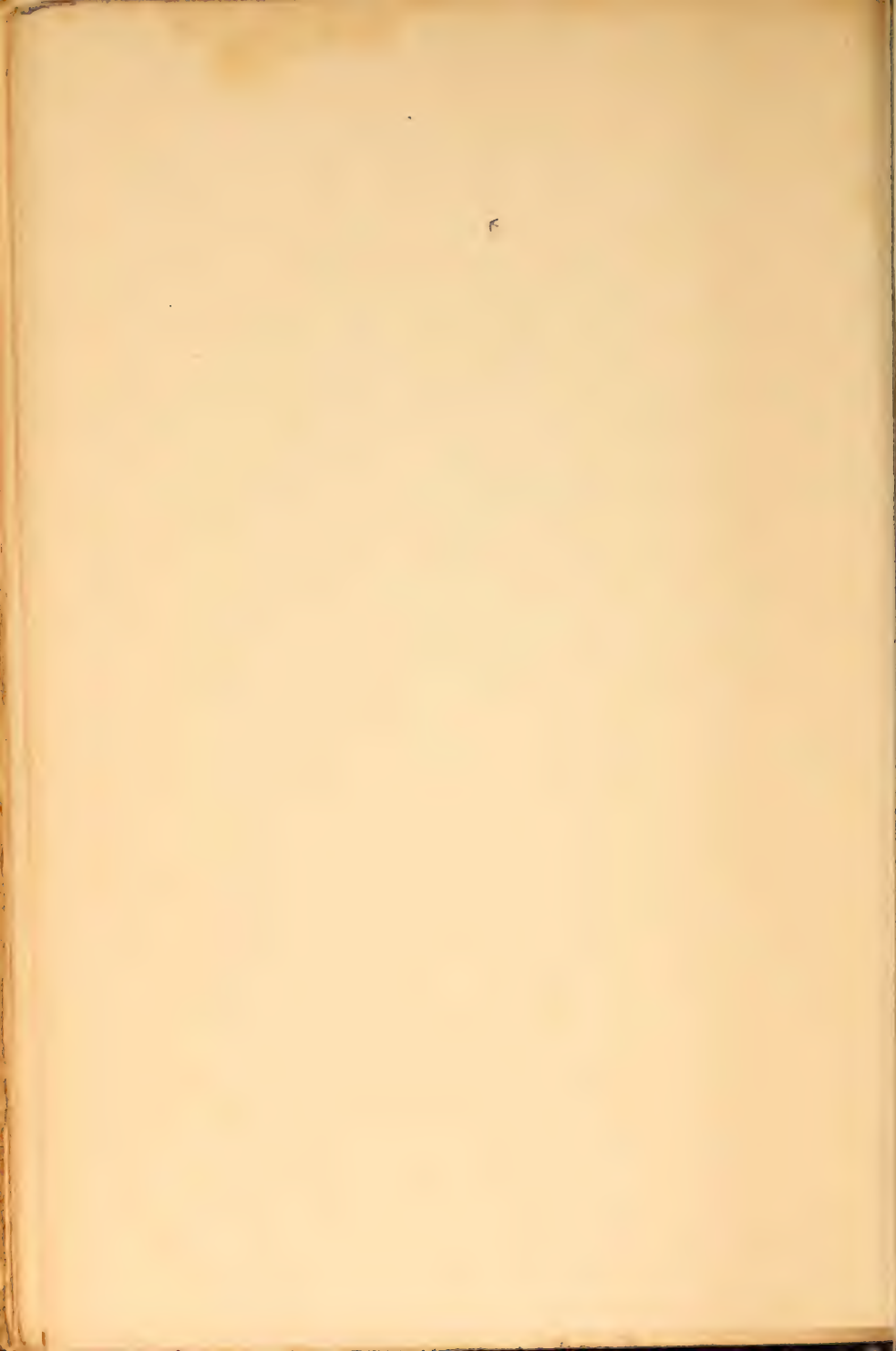
blessed Lamb—the Son of Man—Jesus the Lamb—bathe me in the fountain of the Lamb—the Bride of the Lamb—Thy Bride—beautiful Jesus—strong in spirit—strong—take me into Thy arms—Jesus my bridegroom—my bridegroom—Fountain of blood—fountain of love—fill me—spray over me—Thy love—fill me—fill me. . . . Take me—bridegroom—bridegroom. . . .

[She falls back in a paroxysm, gasping, twisting, shuddering on the floor. Gradually she quiets and lies inert, tremors racking her at moments. In the stillness there is a surreptitious tap at the door. It opens and ALBAUGH comes in. Still lying prostrate she turns her head to see him. She utters a low moaning cry a little of despair, much of ecstasy. Without words, as though moved by a force beyond his own volition, he drops his valise, steps to her, falls to his knees by her side. He bends low over her. INA'S arms reach up around his neck. She draws him down to her.]

CURTAIN



ACT III







SCENE FROM ACT III

ACT III

[*Same scene.*]

[*The next morning—Sunday.*]

[VERNA enters from the dining room. She is making her Sunday morning toilet, a peripatetic toilet. She is combing the lifeless strands of her stringy hair, walking about the house aimlessly as she does so, and singing.]

VERNA

[*Sings.*]

• “Jesus loves me—Jesus loves me—Jesus loves *on-ly* me——”

[*She repeats the refrain, and the combing.*]

“Jesus love me—Jesus loves me—Jesus loves on——

[*The comb strikes a tangle in her hair, she interrupts the singing to twist her face into a snarl as she yanks at it with the comb,—then as she does get the comb through the tangle she continues, God’s little chorister.*]
ly me——”

[INA enters from the dining room. She goes about her routine of life this morning with a

kind of intent absentness, mechanically,—her consciousness is apart. Her mood is calmer on the surface, but a kind of deadly calm—there is a set, ironlike, implacable quality in her. It is as though her consciousness were already determined upon a certain desperate course without yet being aware of that determination, although it be forming. Her hysteria is in no way lessened, in fact it has actually increased—it is only the obvious hysterical symptoms which are less. The hysteric grip upon her psyche has strengthened; it has been driven inward, as it were, to fasten the more relentlessly upon the sources of self.]

INA

Is it nice to comb your hair in the parlor, Vernie?

VERNA

“Jesus loves me——”

INA

Go in the kitchen.

VERNA

“Jesus loves me—Jesus loves me——” Momma, can’t I go to church, too, this morning?

INA

Sunday School is enough for a little girl like you.

VERNA

Can I go to Wednesday night prayer meeting?

INA

If you want to.

VERNA

[Staring desolately out of the window.]

Oh, dear, I hate to-day.

INA

Hate Sunday!—this is the Sabbath day!

VERNA

[Muttering.]

Sunday School ain't anything——!

INA

You've always liked your Sunday School.

VERNA

I like Rev. Albaugh's meetings. How long before another revival week, mamma?

INA

I don't know.

VERNA

Oh, dear—! At prayer meeting can I give testimony?

INA

You can speak—yes. But you've wore yourself all out giving testimony this week.

VERNA

I was a wicked girl—I was filled with sin and onrighteous'ess and now I'm saved. Oh, dear—I can't be sure I'm saved though! Maybe I ain't saved, momma!

INA

Don't begin that again.

VERNA

Will Rev. Albaugh pray for me if I ask him this morning, momma?

INA

Leave Rev. Albaugh alone!

[VERNA *folds her crooked arm silently across her face, with a little sniff.*]

What's the matter now?

VERNA

I feel terrible. I feel I ain't sanctified through and through. And you won't let Rev. Albaugh pray for me——

[*Sniff.*]

And the meetings are over——

[*Sniff.*]

And prayer meeting ain't any good anyway——!

INA

Go finish dressing yourself. Put your blue hair ribbon on.

[VERNA goes, disconsolate, desolated,—life is an empty husk.]

[INA stands with absent, set eyes. Then she goes to bedroom door and looks in on her husband. Then goes up to ALBAUGH's door.]

[*Softly—worshipfully.*]

Rev. Albaugh——!

ALBAUGH

Yes?

[*He comes out.*]

[*They move across to the side away from ROY's door, and sit. They speak low, but not surreptitiously.*]

INA

You got to go to-day.

ALBAUGH

Got to.

[*A pause.*]

INA

Somehow I got to go with you.

ALBAUGH

How can it be, Ina?—it can't.

INA

Somehow I got to.

[*Their speech this morning is quiet, dull—in contrast to the tremulous intensity of the scene last night.*]

Couldn't you—? No, that wouldn't be right—to give up your ministry, and—. If you wasn't a preacher—! But that wouldn't be right.

ALBAUGH

No, that wouldn't be right. I had a call from the Lord to go into Christ's service. I can't turn my back on it. Look at the work I do——!

INA

Yes, I know. I can't help but think if you wasn't a preacher. . . . Or if I wasn't married to him——!

[*Her face darkens bitterly and pinches with hatred and resentment.*]

You ought to see him in there—sot—in a drunken sleep——!

ALBAUGH

It's his weakness. He's a good husband and father when these spells ain't on him.

INA

Oh, good enough. That ain't it! He's *there*! If he was a saint it ud be the same. He's *there*! Did you sleep?

ALBAUGH

Some.

INA

I had the funniest dream——! I dreamt I had to go along a road to get to church—it was the church tower I had to get to—the steeple, a great high steeple,—and right across my way was a log across the road—an awful big log—it was bigger than any log I ever did see actually, and I was struggling to remove it, and knowing I had to get to the church tower—I woke up in a perspiration! Funny the way

you dream. But about your going, and me staying behind . . . somehow that can't be.

ALBAUGH

'Course I don't hold with divorce really, but still——

INA

It would make terrible talk me divorcing Roy! And could I— And it takes a long while and everything—months—I don't know how long. Oh, of course I know I can't go with you—or join you——

[She is convulsed by a racking sob, which she controls.]

ALBAUGH

There—don't— Oh, Iny, little girl. . . .

INA

You do love me like you said?

ALBAUGH

I love you more'n I said—more! There, there—we mustn't talk like this now. We've got to keep holt of ourselves.

INA

Oh, dear! Oh, mercy, mercy! My heart's just

gone outside my body with you—! I'm shut into a grave alive——!

[Her black look goes toward her husband again.]

If it wasn't for him—! He just lies there like a log—might just as well be a log lyin' there—! If it wasn't for him how things could be then . . . !

[Her voice rises with a heartbroken cry of blissful longing on the last words.]

Oh, dear, oh, mercy, mercy!

ALBAUGH

Don't, Iny—don't!

INA

Yes, o' course it was a wicked thought for me to say you might give up your call. With the work you do, and everything— How long ago was it you was called, Rev. Albaugh?

ALBAUGH

'Bout seven years now. I've been most everything in my time. I been an actor. I was on the vawdeville stage. And I joined up with a circus once. And I've been a barker for Carnivals. And I been most everything. I couldn't tell you—some things I'd be ashamed to tell you. Then one night

I felt like a hand was laid on my spirit—and like a voice sez to me in my ear—Come to me, there is work in the Vineyard, and the laborers are few. Do you mean me? I sez. Yes, Sanderson Albaugh, the voice sez. I tried to put it out of my mind. I laughed and joked—I blasphemed and I got drunk. But I couldn't forget the voice that called me. And so I give up fighting against God, and I sez, I'm here, Lord—I'm your servant, do with me according to Thy will. And I begun my preaching right there and then. And the power come to me. And since that day they's been nine thousand three hundred and fifty souls my humble preaching has saved for Christ! Amen. I never was religiously ordained—not by elders and the laying on of hands—but I been ordained by a greater One. Oh, yes, my life would make a book of marvels. I've often thought—some day I might write it. It might be the means of helping some poor sinner like I was.

INA

I got to follow you—somehow—leave all and follow you——!

[VERNA *enters.*]

VERNA

Momma, can I wear my white shoes to Sunday School this Sunday?

INA

Yes, dear. Say good morning to Rev. Albaugh.

VERNA

Good morning, Rev. Albaugh.

ALBAUGH

Good morning, Vernie. She's been our little soldier of the cross all right!

VERNA

Rev. Albaugh—now—will you pray for me?

INA

Not now, dear. Run along. Don't bother Rev. Albaugh. He's had a long hard week—this is Sunday. Now clean your shoes good. You got the toes so dirty what with kneeling down so much. You must whiten 'em nice.

VERNA

Where's the whitening?

INA

Wait. I'll get it.

[She goes in to the bedroom and comes out with a bottle of shoe dressing.]

Here. Now don't spatter. Hold them over the sink.

[VERNA *goes out.*]

[ALBAUGH *has risen.*]

INA

It don't seem like it's real that you've got to go——!

ALBAUGH

What can we do, Iny——?

[*She stands dumbly in misery.*]

We got to pray for grace.

INA

Prayer—yes. That's cold comfort.

ALBAUGH

[*More with fright for himself than with reproach for her.*]

You ain't losing your faith?

INA

No, my faith is founded on the rock. But yet, somehow. . . .

[*Her words end in a silence of dumb misery. They stand thus a few moments.* ALBAUGH

goes into his room, and comes out with his hat.]

ALBAUGH

I'll take a little walk I guess.

INA

The sun's nice.

[He goes.]

[INA goes to her husband's door, she grasps the knob—then lets her hand fall. She raises clenched hands.]

God, let him die! let him die!

[VERNA comes in with her shoes and the bottle.]

VERNA

Look, mamma. Will I put 'em on now?

INA

All right. My, you daubed your hands. *Don't* rub your mouth! My goodness! Don't you know that's poison! A little girl drank some of that the other day and she died; my goodness, be careful, don't get that near your mouth!

[She takes the bottle and starts across with it to put it away again. VERNA is busy putting her shoes on. Suddenly the desperate course, which has been unconsciously determining in

her consciousness, now springs to the forefront of her mind. It grips her. It becomes dominant. It has her in its power. With nothing surreptitious in her manner—only a controlled white heat of purpose—she goes into her husband's room.]

[VERNA, seated on the floor with her shoes, begins to sing.]

VERNA

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

[*There is a knock. Verna admits Mrs. Bascom and Margaret Avery.*]

MRS. BASCOM

Good morning, Vernie, Momma home?

VERNA

Yes'm.

MRS. BASCOM

We were on our way to church just a mite early, and just stopped in. Is Rev. Albaugh around?

VERNA

He's gone out for a walk.

MRS. BASCOM

Oh.

MARGARET

I guess he ain't likely to be back before church?

VERNA

I don't know. I'll ask mamma.

MARGARET

Oh, never mind.

MRS. BASCOM

Where's mamma?

VERNA

She's in there.

[*Yells.*]

Mom-ma——

MRS. BASCOM

Never mind—don't call. We'll set.

VERNA

I went to all the meetings.

MARGARET

Yes, we know.

VERNA

I professed Christ.

MRS. BASCOM

Dear little Vernie.

VERNA

I was a wicked girl—I was steeped in onrightousness and sin. I 'sperienced the saving love of our Saviour. I been saved!

MARGARET

It was a beautiful experience.

VERNA

Will you pray for me, Mis. Bascom?

MRS. BASCOM

Why, yes, Vernie.

MARGARET

You want prayer, dear?

VERNA

I'm awful afraid I ain't saved maybe.

MRS. BASCOM

We'll offer a prayer for you to church, Vernie dear.

VERNA

Oh—not now?

MRS. BASCOM

It's church time—we must be going.

[VERNA feels suddenly moved by the Lord to utter herself in vocal praise. She begins "There is a fountain filled with blood—" The two women join their tremulous unmusical voices. The three voices are raised in song.]

"—Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains,
Lose all their guilty stains."

VERNA

[*Calls again.*]

Momma——

MRS. BASCOM

If momma's dressing never mind.

MARGARET

How's your poppa?

VERNA

He's all right—he's better.

[*She does not want the attention switched from herself to secular interests. She starts another hymn.*]

“What can wash away my stain?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh precious is the flow

That makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know,

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

VERNA

Praise God—Amen!

MRS. BASCOM

[*Without the zest which Verna is throwing into the occasion; rather as a matter of duty toward the young.*]

Amen.

VERNA

[*Calls again.*]

Mom-ma!

MRS. BASCOM

Never mind, Vernie. We must be going along anyhow—it must be time now.

[*But Verna doesn't intend to let this be broken up without an effort. Without preamble she is launched into prayer.*]

VERNA

Oh our Father, we thank Thee for our blessings—
and take our sins from off us—and make us whole—
We are only poor sinners in Thy sight and sunk in
'niquity and sinfulness—we are poor sinners and ask
Thy mercy on our sins—we 'seech Thee to make us
whole and washed in the blood shed for sinners—
Amen.

MRS. BASCOM

Amen.

[*Her response comes with a little more fervor*

this time because she sees in it the chance to get up and get out.]

There goes the bell.

MARGARET

Yes—we'll be late.

[As they are half risen from their chairs, Verna is seized again by the spirit—a torrent of prayer breaks from her, more fervid than before.]

VERNA

Our Saviour Christ, the Lord bless us and give us strength in Thy name—wash us in Thy blood—miserable sinners before the throne of grace—We pray Thee with a contrite heart—give us grace and bring us to Thy throne in glory—glory—hallelujah——

[She is forced here to pause for a breath; Mrs. BASCOM and MARGARET try to take advantage of the moment. But Verna gets ahead of them. With a quick gasp of breath she is off again with a rush.]

Thy children in sin we bow before Thee, merciful God—Thine is the glory—Forgive us, our sins are manifold and we ask Thy blood upon our heads——

[Correcting herself.]

Thy blessing upon our heads—We ask in Thy name—*And*——

MRS. BASCOM

Amen.

MARGARET

Amen.

VERNA

[*Louder and more fervid.*]
And we beseech Thee——

MRS. BASCOM

[*With some severity.*]
Amen, dear, amen!

[*They are on their feet. They have given the coup de grace to VERNA's orgy. They move instantly to the door.*]

Tell your momma we couldn't wait no longer, Vernie.

[*They go.*]
[*VERNA is like a new person. She runs to the bedroom door and calls through to her mother, elated, buoyant.*]

VERNA

Momma, I had a prayer meeting—I had a prayer meeting, momma!

[*She skips darting across the floor and out.*]

[*INA now returns from the bedroom. She walks about a little—then stands—then takes a few more steps. Her eyes are unseeing. Then, busily, she takes out her work basket from the place where it has been put away, sits in her chair and begins her sewing.*]

[*VERNA returns.*]

VERNA

[*With a horrified astonishment, which tells what an unprecedented occurrence this is.*]

Mom-ma, you're sewing on *Sun-day*! Why, Mom-ma!

INA

[*This brings INA to herself, she starts, blinks.*]

Oh!—Oh, mercy—! Oh—! Why, wha'ever—!
Oh mercy—!

[*Hastily she puts the work basket away again.*]

VERNA

Why, Mom-ma——

INA

Hurry on, you'll be late now!

VERNA

Lay-ut—? Why, it ain't even church time yet hardly!

INA

Momma's . . .

[*She seeks for some excuse to finish her sentence.*]

got a headache——

VERNA

Why don't you go lie down?

[*INA is staring directly at Verna—but blind and deaf.*]

VERNA

Do you want me to make you a cup of tea or something, momma? Momma, do yuh? Momma, I say do you want something?

INA

What—what, dear?

VERNA

[*Turns away disgusted with such a stupid mother.*]

My goodness!

[*There is a knock; INA looks toward the door, but moves away.*]

[*VERNA opens the door and admits MINNIE HERRICK—a woman of thirty-eight. She has blonde hair which has been touched up for many years, a face hardened by life, but not by nature; a pleasant, garrulous, harmlessly vulgar woman.*]

MINNIE

Good morning. Pardon me.

[*She sees INA and steps into the room. VERNA closes the door, and remains hanging on the knob, gaping.*]

INA

Good morning——

MINNIE

Is this Mrs. Bowman?

INA

Yes. Won't you set down?

MINNIE

Oh, thank you. I hope you'll pardon me intruding like this, but I was told Mr. Albaugh was boarding here to your house—Rev. Albaugh——

INA

He's staying here. But I don't take no board from him.

MINNIE

I've been hunting for him— My gracious, I should say I have! You say he's here?

INA

Rev. Albaugh's out just now— He went for a walk. What—er——?

MINNIE

It's many a long day since I've seen him! And it's many a long day since he's seen me! I guess you'll laugh maybe when I spring it—I'm his wife!

[INA is silent; gradually she seems to shrink, to grow smaller and smaller, her face to pinch and draw, as she sits in her chair with her eyes fixed on the woman who never stops her flow of words.]

Yes, sir, his wife! He'll be surprised I shouldn't wonder. It's eighteen years since I haven't seen nor heard hide nor hair of him—eighteen years! I'm not blaming *him*—I'm not *blaming* him,—we had our differences, and I was to blame, too, I s'pose. And times was hard—we couldn't get work. You know how 'tis. We was in vawdeville. I met him that way. He left me—he left me flat. You know how 'tis—

But that's all long ago and past and forgotten. I s'pose I wouldn't even have heard tell of him again but for his taking up this revival work! I happened to see a squib in a paper, and the name struck me—Albaugh, I sez to myself, that was Sanderson's mother's name— You see he took that name evidently. And then Sanderson ain't a common first name. It's Sanderson Herrick, I sez, as I'm alive! It's like him to take to revival work, if it ain't him all over! I sez. I haven't come to make trouble for him—I ain't that kind. You know how 'tis—I'd like to see him again after all these years, and maybe he'd like to see me, I sez to myself. All that's past and gone. But to think of his being a preacher! I always said he had a wonderful personality. And whatever he does he does heart and soul. How soon you think he'll be in? Huh—? I sez, how soon do you think he'll be coming in?

[INA's voice is dry, her lips move but no sound comes from them,—she can only shake her head a little.]

Huh?—you don't know? Well, if it ain't an imposition I'd like to wait. Yes, he's a wonderful man—always was. I always knew he'd make his mark. I've got on pretty well myself. I give up the stage and been living in Parkersburg, West Virginia. I was took dreadful sick years back, and when I got up from the hospital I went south, and after one thing

and another I landed in Parkersburg, and I've got a right comfortable business there now—hair dressing and Beauty Parlor, and rooms above, no board though,—I couldn't be bothered. Nice people I've got in my house. Nothing shady. Oh—there!—is that him?

[The door opens and ALBAUGH enters. On the second look he recognizes his wife.]

ALBAUGH

Huh——?

MINNIE

Do you reco'nize me, Sanderson? Yes, 'tis me! Here I am! I was just telling Mis. Bowman I hadn't come to make you no trouble—I ain't that kind, you know that, Sanderson! Even if you did leave me flat once. But bygones are bygones. You haven't changed such an awful lot, Sanderson!

INA

[In a strange thin voice.]

You never said——

ALBAUGH

Minnie! I—I thought you was dead——!

MINNIE

Me dead! Hah—that's a good one! No, sir, not me! I'm alive and kicking!

ALBAUGH

I heard you was . . . !

MINNIE

You *heard* I was—! If that ain't like you, Sanderson Herrick! to not bother to find out! That's just off a piece of everything he's ever done, Mis. Bowman!—a drifter if there ever was one! Never looked the matter up!

[Her attitude towards this is that of indulgent, almost amused, reproof.]

No sir, I told 'em they wouldn't ever carry me out of that hospital—I'd walk out on my feet—and I did! So you thought I'd kicked the bucket—! He couldn't a cared much to find out, I will say!

ALBAUGH

[Wiping the sweat from his brow.]

I—I *heard* you was dead, Minnie. I—No, I didn't go looking up proof— No, I didn't— You know how it was—we'd parted—I *thought* it was true you was dead, Minnie. . . .

[INA begins a convulsive laughter, which grows into a scream.]

ALBAUGH

Ina! My God! Ina!

MINNIE

What's the matter here?

[VERNA, who had been taking it all in unnoticed, agape, begins to whimper.]

ALBAUGH

Get something—get a doctor! Go call your father—go wake him up! Get him up!

[VERNA, frightened, runs into the bedroom.]

INA

[Realizing after a moment.]

Don't let her go in there!—don't let her go in there!

[She rises to go after VERNA, but meets her as VERNA comes screaming out from the room, with blanched face.]

VERNA

Poppa . . . ! Poppa . . . ! Look at poppa——!

INA

Hush up—shut up—shut up——!

[ALBAUGH and MINNIE stand agape, petrified.

ALBAUGH looks beyond, into the bedroom,
frightened of what he may find there.]

[THE CURTAIN falls to indicate the passing of a
few hours. It rises again.]

[ALBAUGH stands at the side. The CORONER is
walking back and forth.]

CORONER

Terrible thing, Rev. Albaugh—terrible thing!

ALBAUGH

My God, she couldn't have done it!

CORONER

Terrible—terrible thing! And to come on top of
this week of prayer and uplift!

ALBAUGH

She couldn't have done it!

[The SHERIFF enters.]

SHERIFF

They tell me it looks bad for Mrs. Bowman——.

CORONER

[*Nods.*]

He died of poisoning from that shoe polish—there's the bottle of it—and then her own emotions on top of it all—! I guess it's up to you, Sheriff—

ALBAUGH

She couldn't have done such a thing—she couldn't have!

CORONER

Don't *seem* so—but you see for yourself, Rev. Albaugh. Over strained maybe—I dunno. Seems like things might have been maybe too much for her. . . . Life *is* too much for some. Seems as if we aren't just equal to combating with life—some of us. *Any* of us!—take it one way and another. . . .

SHERIFF

Where is she?

CORONER

In there. The Doctor's here. He's with her.

SHERIFF

I got to take her, I guess.

[*Sheriff looks toward the dining-room door, nerving himself to his harrowing duty.*]

[The door opens and INA enters, followed by the DOCTOR. INA is smiling a silly, happy smile. Upon her head is a wreath of paper flowers, and a piece of white mosquito netting arranged something like a wedding veil.]

[Simpering prettily.]

Good morning! Good morning! How do you do all! Happy is the Bride the sun shines on!

[She goes to the CORONER.]

And you've been saved too. Praise God—Hallelujah! Over three million have been saved! Yes! What a harvest——!

[She sings "Jesus is Mine".]

[She goes up to the SHERIFF, prettily.]

I'm so glad to see you here. Won't you set down?

[She has paid no more attention to ALBAUGH than to the others—she has included him in her general, impersonal greeting.]

SHERIFF

We're going to take a little drive now.

INA

Oh, pardon me—just a moment. I forgot you haven't met my intended!

[She smiles a proud, happy, humble smile and indicates an imaginary figure at her side.]

Let me introduce the bridegroom—Mr. Christ. Oh, I am such a proud and happy girl!

SHERIFF

[*Touches her on the arm.*]
You better come with me now.

INA

Yes? Are we ready?

[*She links her hand in the SHERIFF's arm. They walk up to the door. INA takes the measured steps of a bride walking up the church aisle. She hums the wedding march—"Tum-tum-te-tum—tum-tum-te-tum"—etc. Her head is drooped, her hands hold an imaginary bridal bouquet. She passes out thus on the arm of the SHERIFF.*]

[*ALBAUGH's knees melt under him; he sinks to the floor covering his face.*]

ALBAUGH

God forgive me—God forgive me!

CURTAIN

